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Social and cultural pathology of women-headed households (Region 7 of Tehran Municipality)

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Abstract

Despite equal & unequal social opportunities societies provide their members for growth and promotion, in all human communities there are groups and strata that are more vulnerable to various damages than other groups. Such individuals and groups are brought together under the general title of vulnerable groups. Female-headed households are one of these groups. This paper aims to identify harms and problems facing female-headed households and to provide strategies to control and reduce these harms. Research approach in this study has arisen concerning two groups of theories: the psychology and sociology. Finally, inspired by the ideas of Adamaz, Brisco Parkers and Somer in the field of psychology and by the theories of the feminization of poverty, class and disability theory and the theory of state action in the field of sociology is the theoretical framework for analyzing the issue. The (statistical) population is all female-headed households in Municipality System in District 7. Research is a multi-stage with a combination of documentary, survey and analysis techniques. And in the final stage utilizes expert opinion in the form of group discussions, Delphi method and also derive some results based on theoretical models appropriate to different groups are presented separately. The results show that major damages and issues of female-headed households include the four major categories of economic, social, mental & damages on their children.

Keywords: female-headed households, social damage, social issues.

1. Introduction

Different communities provide equal or unequal social opportunities for each of their members to grow and improve and in the meantime, always and in all human societies with social stratification, we can find groups and strata that are more susceptible **to different damages than** other groups or they do not have enough ability to administer their life and provide the minimum facilities that are necessary for life. And therefore they requires the help and support of others, such as government institutions and organizations, charitable persons, etc. (Moayedfar, 2:1386) These persons and groups can be brought together under the general title vulnerable that women-headed households are considered one of them.

Female as half of the population can have constructive and effective role in the progress, evolution and development of society, but for centuries in spite of all of their different spheres of production and reproduction they have been faced to inattention. Not only in family framework

from the legal- economic point but only in the society level nobody attention to the role of them. (Piran, 1386, P.1). In addition, women as one of the vulnerable strata of societies are exposed discriminations of social and psychological pressures more than others. In the meantime, those women who are responsible of family responsibilities for some reasons are more vulnerable. This group generally includes women-headed households, girls and female who are responsible for their life themselves and the number of them has been increased in recent years due to various reasons, such as increasing the rate of divorce, reducing the rate of marriage, mortality, internal and external immigration. The term "women-headed households" refers to women who are responsible for meeting their livelihood or manage their affairs or their family's affairs for permanently or temporarily. And they face to many problems and barriers in their personal life, family life and also in their social life. According to the problems of urbanization in big cities and inattention to meeting the problems of women-headed households, this group can cause irreparable damages to the society. Thus, one of the institutions and social service organizations in each country's duties is paying enough attention to their problems and giving correct and accordance to the principle solutions.

Nowadays, the problems of these women are so much that a legal institution and organization should undertake to support and protecting them.

This group of women are in the group of social vulnerable that on the one hand they face to many problems and hurts and obstacles in their personal life, family life and social life and on the other hand, because of problems of urbanism in big cities and also inattention to meet the problems of women-headed household, this group can cause irreparable damages to the society. They have faced to contrast of roles because they are in twosome situation that in one side is their womanly roles and on the other side is traditional manly roles; and this factor cause that they do not have proper efficiency in both fields and thus they face to different types of improper social encounter. Exposure to a harmful situation like being female beside of being employed and headed households, it cause that women face to series of problems that both these persons as a stratum of society that are in a problematic situation and also the society have not enough knowledge about the situation that they are face. (Foroozan, 1382)

Measurement the social and cultural situation of women-headed households is important in both terms of theoretical and practical and this will lead to understanding sociological and we can also use from the situation of this group for policy and planning by recognizing the effective variables on them so that take a step towards empowerment them by take them out from support umbrella. Given the importance of family and the role of families in providing for the basic needs of its members on the one hand, and on the other hand Gender-based discrimination, and also legal restrictions and inequalities in most fields of social, economic and cultural for women in most countries like our country, it becomes necessary to investigate the character of economic and social women-headed households in comparison to men. Thus the researcher in this research is following to pay attention to problems of this group of society in Tehran and also giving correct and accordance to the principle solutions to support them that these are one of the duties of institutions and Social service organizations in each country.

2. Research objectives

Survey damages and social problems of women-headed households

Survey economic issues that women-headed households are faced to

Survey damages of spiritual - mental of women-headed households

Survey family issues that women-headed households are faced to
Give solution to overcome the current situation

3. The theoretical background in Iran and the world

In order to take advantage of the experience of researchers we will focus on reviewing studies in Iran and the world.

The studies of Lee¹ in 1998 showed that women-headed households have more psychological in comparison to other women. They face to not only economic problems, but also some negative social pressures, such as negative attitude than widows and divorced women. Of course types of stressors, level of support received severity of depressive symptoms among single mothers and heads of households and married women are different, the major stressors for mothers and single supervisors are unemployment, insufficient earnings and housing problems, which show the highest correlation with depression (lee.1998).

Lopata² concluded that women in their study with the death of his wife, are susceptible to detachment from the community and they know the previous roles of the husband necessary (as the partner and common member in social communications) for continuing their collaborative relationships and social collisions. These women decrease their relationship with their husband's relatives and sometimes they cut it easily after the death of their spouse.(Rak, Abbaspoor,1372)

The study of Maris³ shows that the factors that reinforce widow to separate from other people as following: tend of women-headed households that desire to be independent, hate from the feeling of self-pity, social disappointment and sadness, failure in effort of the family to console the person who does not get consolation, outburst the side effects of poverty, such as low capital for transportation and entertainment.(Rak, Bagheri, Attaran, 1372)

Shadi Talab is following to achieve an appropriate way to empower the women-headed households in cities in a project that has done it for the office of Research and Women's Studies at Tehran University with the following title: "Methods of Empowering Female Headed households". She considers composing of the views of theoreticians and developers in this project. The default of the project is as following: The development approaches that organize women around their practical needs and it causes that women achieve to deeper knowledge from the necessity of fundamental changes in structures and their relationship with other people especially men.

In this study she concludes that the percentage of absolute poverty in women-headed households is more that men-headed families. Absolute poor in a community is called to people that their income is less than minimum certain living (basic needs), In fact, these people live under the poverty line. In the years 1370,1375,1380 the cost of all women-headed households has not allow to family members to achieve to minimum requirements and percentage of them are respectively 45/4,52,17/5. So these people have lived in absolute poverty. While this index for men in the same years were 25/4, 16/1, 14/8 percent respectively. (Shadi Talab, 1383, P.60)

According to study with title" Survey of mental health of women-headed households that are covered by social welfare organization in Tehran Province" that Tehran Welfare Organization has

¹. lee.1998

². Lopata, 1969

³. Maris, 1978

it done in collaboration with investigation assistance of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation of Sciences University, it shows that women-headed households have experienced more stress and have had less quality of life than other women, also the multiplicity of roles that women-headed households undertake, have direct impact on creating stress, intensify disorders and appearing physical diseases. This study has been done on 140 of women-headed households that are under the cover of East, West, Shar-e-Ray, Shemiranaat and 40 of women-headed households who are behind the turn of being under cover and it indicate this stark reality that these women in all dimensions of mental health have had much worse condition than women who are under cover and also depression in these women are much more than others.

4. Theoretical Foundations

In respect of the research subject, the researcher has studied and surveyed two theories in two general theories of psychology and sociology theories.

In section of psychology theories, he studies on the problems and damages that this group of women has exactly after their divorce or death of their spouse. Such as take care of child, finding adequate shelter and household livelihoods security, the difficulties arising from that she is the only adult household and she must undertake the role of father and mother together, therefore she has to do multiple roles and in some cases playing these roles are in conflict with each other. Thus, female faced to problems in both financial and emotional-mental aspects and also experiences more stress and anxiety. And about 10 to 20 percent of these women have been diagnosed as depressed patient. In this section of theories, it has been used from theories of Adamaz, Brisco Parkers and Somer.

In section of sociology theories, it has been used the following theories: Feminization of poverty theory, Structural-functional theory, Theory of class and inability of governments, Interaction theory.

Feminization of poverty theory approximately represents the difficulties of women-headed households especially on our community, but the sexual discriminatory system sometimes deprives women from their opportunities for employment, recreational and also their equal opportunity with men and it is almost colorless in community. Women-headed households face to hard and difficult situations by losing their reliance in the life for subsistence. (Mohammadi, 32, 1386) Structural-functional theory is greatly in favor of the traditional family knows that female occupation out of the house causes deviation of family functions and attribute the following characteristics to these group of people: high rates of crime, drug deals and birthdays without legitimate marriage.(Heman:23)

Interaction theory also represents part of the problem about women-headed households. This theory tells that we should not tell all women-headed households are vulnerable, and we should not connive at the effort of all mothers who defeat problems and keep their family safe exactly when the situation of living is not good at all.(Heman:24)

In this study we compare social and cultural pathology of women-headed households with variables and indexes like economic damages, social damages, mental damages and those damages that are related to children.

5. Research Methodology

In this study, it has been tried to measure prioritize social and cultural pathology of women-headed households by execute a "Scrolling". In this study three methods of documentation, scrolling and field study will be used. The measurement tool for documentation is taking note, for scrolling is questionnaire and for field study method is interview and observation. This study performed in several stages, with a combination of different methods of documentation, scrolling, analytical:

In first stage, we studied the information of women-headed households in area1 in region7 on municipality of Tehran within available documents by purposive sampling method.

In second stage, we did a scrolling study about women-headed households who live in area1 in region7 on municipality, and as the number of women who lived in area1 (75 persons) was not many and also because of their availability, this scrolling done completely.

And in the last stage by taking advantage of expert opinions (In the form of group discussions or by using Delphi method) and also concluding some results based on the theoretical models, it was presented proper solutions to control and decrease the damages and problems that women-headed households, divided into different groups, face to.

6. Research findings

In this section of the report we present our findings from the research. To achieve this goal, according to theoretical Principles that has been propounded, problems and damages that are in front of women-headed households were divided into 4 categories: economic, social, mental and damages that are related to children. And each of these damages was evaluated by indicators. In the first step in each type of damage, the priority of damages was determined and finally, according to research subject priorities of types of damages has been determine.

Table 1: Economic Damages

Row	Economic damages	Average percentage
1	Low income and poverty	70.63
2	Inability to supply and take care of baby	52.12
3	Inability to find a proper shelter	62.3
4	Inappropriate situation nutrition	30.78
5	The lack of jobs and adequate income	40.23
6	Working in marginal, part time and informal jobs	20.8
7	Lack of access to job opportunities equality with men	20.6

In this study, economic damage has been evaluated based on the 7 indicators. Results show that "low income and poverty," with an average of 70.63 percent is the most economic damage in the

opinion of this group of women. "Inability to find shelter" and also "Inability to supply and take care of baby" are in the next ranks.

Table 2: Social Damages

Row	Social Damages	Average percentage
1	Multiple and conflicting role playing	40.87
2	Spouse Addiction	85.23
3	Hurt and rape	70.98
4	Lack of social security	50.32
5	Restriction of social relations	30.45
6	Lack of opportunities for entertainment and appropriate leisure	12.1
7	Remarriage problem	65.23
8	Prostitution	20.3
9	Probability to affected with sexually transmitted diseases Being infected with	40.6
10	Probability of unwanted pregnancy	40.21
11	Unhealthy abortions	20.3
12	Lack of expertise and skill	24.3

Social damages are composed from combination of 12 indicators. The information of table2 shows that women-headed households of area1 in region 7 of municipality introduce "Spouse Addiction" with an average of 85.23 percent is the most important social damage. "Hurt and rape" and "Remarriage problem" are in the next ranks and it shows the traditional environment reigning in Iran's society. And "Lack of opportunities for entertainment and appropriate leisure" is in last rank with the minimum percent and this represents the low level of public awareness of women in Iran's society.

Table 3: Mental Damages

Row	Mental Damages	Average percentage
1	Isolation	54.93
2	Depression and anxiety	67.14
3	Stress and tension	69.23
4	Catabolism and feeling inability	50.23
5	Feelings powerlessness	70.56
6	Lack of companion and feeling loneliness	96.23
7	Lack of emotional supports	64.78
8	Obsession and aggressiveness	46.38
9	Psychosis	37.12
10	Feelings of inferiority, helplessness, fear and embarrassment	65.12
11	Negative attitude toward women-headed households	72.69

According to above table, mental damage has been evaluated by measurement of 11 indicators. The information shows that almost all indicators have high average and "Lack of companion and feeling loneliness" with the average of 94.78 is on the top in mental damages.

Table 4: Damages that are related to children

Row	Damages that are related to children	Average percentage
1	Social education and discipline of children	32.45
2	supply offspring health	45.23
3	Hygiene and emotional development of children	23.12
4	Problems of children in single parent	21.00
5	Ill-treatment and harsh methods of education in relation to children	52.3
6	Child labor in black and informal jobs	14.36
7	Children social delinquency	62.47
8	Children malnutrition	54.98
9	Academic failure of children	57.35
10	Dowry problem for daughters	54.68

The above table indicates the information of damages that are related to children of women-headed households.

"Children social delinquency" with an average of 62.47 percent is in the first rank. "Children malnutrition" and "Academic failure of children" are the most important damages that are related to children in this group.

Table 5: Damages and problems of women-headed households

Row	Damages and problems of women-headed households	Average
1	Economic damages	75.32
2	Social damages	68.47
3	Mental damages	68.76
4	Damages that are related to children	54.26

According to above table, the damages of women-headed households has been divided to 4 mental variables: Economic damages, Social damages, Mental damages, Damages that are related to children. The information indicates that economic damages with an average 75.32 percent is in first rank. And the problem of poverty in women-headed households is always more than male-headed families. Economic poverty has direct and indirect impact on the cultural-social situation and also on family ecological situation. And mental damages in next rank with a average 68.76

7. Conclusions

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the damage and problems women-headed households are faced to and provide suitable solutions for controlling and reducing these damages. Constitution has been given family supervision to men and in fact men are the head and breadwinner of their family. For any reason, if man has inability to play his role, in many cases, woman will be replaced his role and in addition to the role of motherhood, she will be responsible the power of life management especially in terms of economic and she should be responsible for several tasks the head of household and it will have specific consequences for these.

And in this field we have studied and surveyed 2 types of theories in 2 general groups as following: psychology and sociology theories. In psychology theories, it has been used from theories of Adamaz, Brisco , Parkers and Somer. And in sociology theories, it has been used Feminization of poverty theory, Structural-functional theory, Theory of class and inability of governments and Interaction theory. For doing this study, three methods of documentation, scrolling and field study have been used. The measurement tool for documentation is taking note, for scrolling is questionnaire and for field study method is interview and observation. In this study, it has been showed that the most damages and problems of women-headed households are 4 variables: Economic damages, Social damages, Mental damages, Damages that are related to children and each of them was evaluated with some indicators.

In this study, economic damage has been evaluated based on the 7 indicators and "low income and poverty," is the most economic damage in the opinion of this group of women. "Inability to

find shelter" and also "Inability to supply and take care of baby" are in the next ranks. Social damages are composed from combination of 12 indicators that "Spouse Addiction" is the most important social damage. "Hurt and rape" and "Remarriage problem" are in the next ranks and it shows the traditional environment reigning in Iran's society. And "Lack of opportunities for entertainment and appropriate leisure" is in last rank with the minimum percent and this represents the low level of public awareness of women in Iran's society. Mental damage has been evaluated by measurement of 11 indicators and "Lack of companion and feeling loneliness" is on the top in mental damages. Damages that are related to children has been evaluated by measurement of 10 indicators and it indicates that "Children social delinquency" is in the first rank. "Children malnutrition" and "Academic failure of children" are the most important damages that are related to children in this group.

And totally, damages and problems of women-headed households indicates In 4 main variables that economic damages is in first rank of these damages.

Women headed households have less education and technical skills and education in comparison of other women. Thus, there is a higher probability that these women work in jobs with low wages even if they do economic activity. Bad economic situation has caused that both women-headed households and their children become the most vulnerable strata of society against social damages and often a symptom of mental illness are seen between them such as depression, anxiety, obsession and aggression. Here we can pay attention to the relationship between economic problems and mental problems that low income with low socioeconomic situation is associated with high rate of mental disorders.

According to the variety of damages that these women had been exposed to and deal with it now, it is necessary to find an appropriate solution for their problems considering each of their problems. Consequently, in this article we have proposed three approaches in respect of the problems of Women headed households that we can summarize them into three general approaches:

1 - Approach of Prevention:

Solutions that are suggested in this approach in order to overcome the problems of women headed households include: Effort to reduce the rate of mortality of men-headed households, increase life expectancy, reduce rate of crimes between men-headed households, expand insurance coverage between villagers and tribal, efforts to restore wife's fiscal rights at the time of death or divorce from Spouse.

2 - Supportive approach

It seems that supportive approach should be belongs to elderly women and women who have a lower level of literacy. They are not in a situation to become occupying or learn profession or increase their literacy levels and also, women who have no income and have difficulty in meeting their basic needs. And the rest women-headed households become ready for the future supply with empowerment and self-sufficiency that they are divided in 3 levels: legal support, economic support, social and cultural support.

Legal support includes: Allocation family benefit costs to women-headed households, Possibility of using the first spouse's pension in case of divorce from her second husband, amending the rule of social security pensioners, allocation specific budget line from the planning and management organization to all departments for supporting women-headed households,

Elimination inequality wage between men and women-headed households in equal jobs, necessity of implementing the insurance plan for housewives and survival this insurance after husband's death, amendment blood money for women-headed households in case of killings deliberate or advertently, transfer rights of women-headed households to survivors after their death, etc.

Economic support includes: Pay attention to inflation rate and economic assistance in pension in women-headed families, employment of women headed households being in priority, training job skills and performing vocational programs for jobseekers or unemployed women-headed households, Opening channels of lending to women-headed households and self-supervisor, Establishment production cooperatives and special services for women headed households, Increase long term loans with little returns installments, Allocating funds for the expansion of insurance coverage and insurance of all female-headed households, expand domestic employment for women-headed households by identifying and training domestic vocation that has good income, in order to allocate enough opportunity to educate their children, establish enough pension for women-headed household or self-supervisor to meet their needs, etc.

Social and cultural support includes: Establishing counseling centers and possibility to access better of free counseling services for women-headed families, create a comprehensive database of women-headed households and statistical control of in each year, providing training, counseling and educational services for women headed households' children, creating motivation in women-headed households to improve their knowledge and literacy, making culture in families to support women-headed households in addition to father-in-law and legal guardian's support, identification, protection and meet economic needs of needy damaged women (handicapped, elderly and headed households) in order to achieve social justice, etc.

3. Empowerment approach

Women empowerment is a dynamic process that includes women's ability to change those structures and ideologies that have kept them in inferior position (dependency). This process helps women to achieve to more resources and control over the life, it leads that they feel more independence and their self-confidence and self-esteem will increase, it means that it improves the image that women have from themselves. (Ogoombeh, 2001:13)

This process enables women to gain autonomy, control and confidence and act with a sense of individual and collective power beside a group of men and women to supremacy on dominant social conditions. Therefore, the main thing to empowering women is improving their awareness through necessary training to improve their social base. (Shadi Talab, 1384)

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