

# A Sociological Study of Economic Problems Faced by Mothers in the Single Parent Family

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The human family is a universal social institution, the sociologists and anthropologists defined this in various ways. The family is not just a cultural thing but it is a universal institution (Murdock, 1949). Family is a factory producing human personalities and it is a unit with the married couple and their children. The most important function of the family is to provide the child with a social status and socialization process (Mead,1964). Generally, a person born into society takes the membership of two families. Those are family of orientation and family of procreation (Cone and Pelto, 1967).

In modern society family faces a large number of changes. In the current special set up, one of the major problems that a family encounters is disorganization. Through it, the single parent family has been created. Single parent family is a family where only one of the parents, either mother or father, has to fulfill the financial, material and emotional needs of the children, without the help of someone else. Single parent families may be created due to widowhood, divorce, under-age pregnancies without a lawful marriage, leaving of one party without divorce (<https://www.encyclopedia>). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 15% of the world's children live in single-parent households. Of the single parent families, 85% are single mothers. This is more common in industrialized countries. (<https://singleparenthack.wordpress.com>).

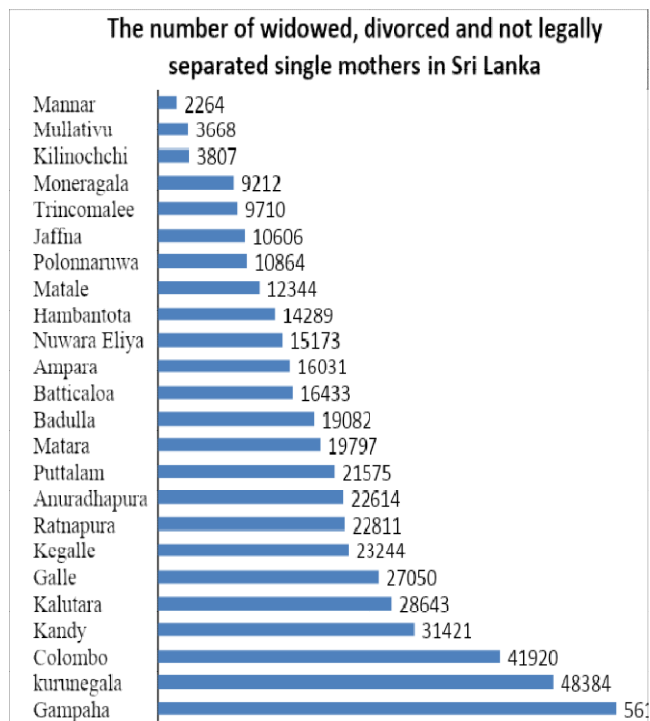
Some analysts have suggested that female headed families are responsible for the growth of an underclass. Indeed, evidence from a number of studies suggests that single parents are at increased risk for financial hardships (Weissman,Leaf and Bruce,1987). The result of the study revealed that financial problem was the main stressor for majority of the single mothers. The emotional life of the single mother was also affected by their single status. Majority of the single mother reported that they felt lonely, helpless, hopeless, lack of identity and lack of confidence. Also they had develop poor food and eating habits ( Kotwal and Prabhakar,2017).

The poor economic position of single mother household is a result of three factors: women's generally lower wages, lower economic support from men, and a relatively great need for income (Sorensen,1994). Economic and life circumstances of single parent families are often considerable different from those two parent families (Scott, 1993). There were lower

well-being of children in single mothers than in two parent families could not be completely explained by economic disadvantage (Amato and leith, 1991).

According to the 2001 census reports in Sri Lanka, there were 209839 single parent families in 18 districts, while the highest number of single parent families was reported from the Kurunegala District (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001). According to the 2012 census reports, there has been an increase in the number of widowed, divorced and not legally separated single mothers, the number being 501,460. The highest number is reported in 2012 was 56121 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012). According to the statistics in Sri Lanka and the world, single-mother based single-parent families are taking a higher number. Therefore, the researcher studied on the mothers in the single parent family.

Graph 1: The number of widowed, divorced and not legally separated single mothers in Sri Lanka.



(Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka ,2012).

In this study, single parent family and specially; the single mothers were studied. The need of income to improve family well-being is perhaps the most important fact for the family. The research examined the economic problems faced by single mothers and also focused to assess the family background, causes for single motherhood, debt burden of single mothers which could negatively affect due to the ill-effects of the marital relations of the single parent family.

### Objectives

#### Main Objective

- The main objective of this research is to Study the economic problems faced by mothers in the single parent family.

#### Specific Objectives

- Identify the family background of the single mothers.
- Study the causes for single motherhood.
- Study the economic background of single mothers.
- Identify the Suggestions to uplift single mothers.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Field of study and sample

According to the 2012 census report in Sri Lanka the highest number of single mothers reported at Mahara Divisional Secretariat of Gampaha district. As the field of research were used 246 A Kandaliyaddapuluva West in Mahara Divisional Secretariat Division of Gampaha. 246 A Kandaliyaddapuluva West GN Division had 179 single parent households and representing those, 54 households are being chosen at 30% of sample under systematic sample method.

### Data Collection

The research is fundamentally based on,

#### a) Primary sources

Information was collected partly by interviewing and also using a pre-determined questionnaire to obtain information from the sample consisted of single mothers.

#### b) Secondary Sources

Required secondary information was gathered from relevant books, thesis, statutes, reports, internet, newspaper articles, magazines and periodicals.

### Data analysis

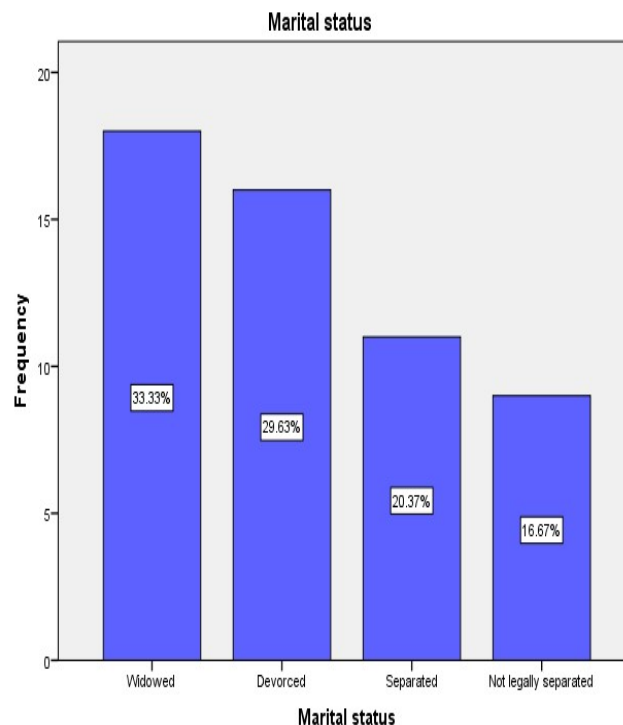
This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods to study about the financial problems faced by single mothers.

## III. RESULTS

Most of single mothers were between age group 34-40. Out of the total sample, 57% of single mothers were found age group 35-40. Only a limited number of single mothers were reported to be age group 17-22. From the subjects considered, 3/4<sup>th</sup> was

Sinhalese. Tamils & Muslims were 13% and 11% respectively. These percentages match with the respective ratios of the country. Again, from the subjects 3/4<sup>th</sup> was Buddhists. And Islamic & Hindus were 11% and 13% respectively.

Graph 2 - Marital status of Single mothers

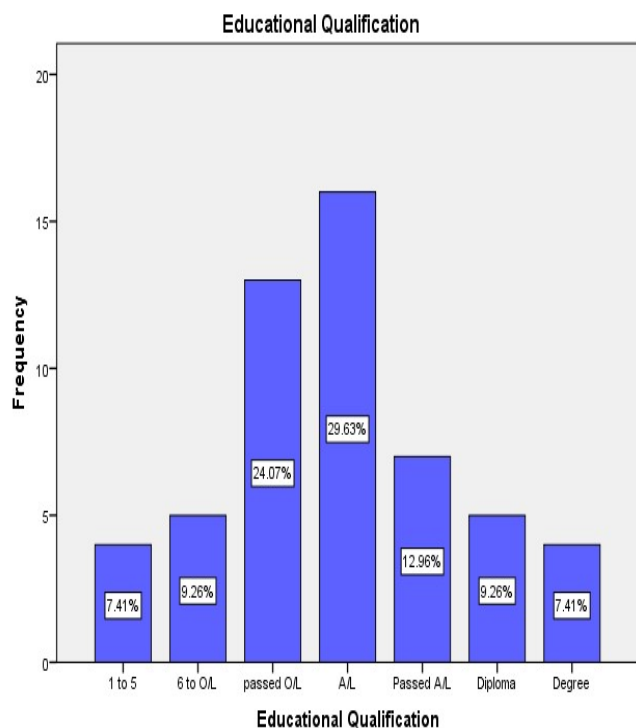


(Sources Field Research 2020)

From the women participated in the research, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of them were widowed due to husband's death. 30% were divorced and 20% were separated, but 17% of women were not legally separated. From these women, 41% were love marriages while the other 59% were married through proposals. An interesting fact found with this is that 98% of women were married under 24, while 41% were married under 18%. The age when married is considerably young in these women compared to the average marrying age in the country.

Mainly there were 3 reasons affected these under age marriages. The most common was economic problems. More than half(55%) of these women who married under age stated that the reason for marrying at a young age was due to economic problems that were in the family. 23% reported the cause as due to different family problems. Also, about a quarter (23%) of these under age marriages were due to under age pregnancies because of lack of using proper birth control methods. 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of women stated the reason for desertion by the husband was due to economic problems.

Graph 3- Educational Qualification of Single mothers

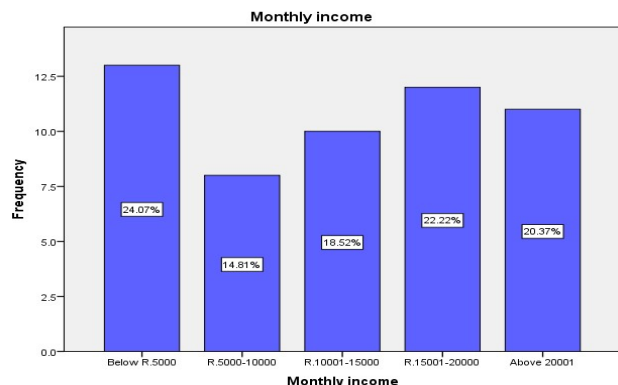


(Sources Field Research 2020)

When analysing the educational level these women have completed, 7% are degree holders and another 9% are diploma holders. In contrast, another 7% have gone to school only up to grade 5 or less, and another 9% have gone to school only up to O/L or less. So totally 17% have an education less than OL, and 17% have education beyond ALs. Overall 30% of the totals have passed ALs.

63% of these women are employed, while 37% do not engage in any kind of employment. From the employed women, majority (56%) are employed in the private sector. 9% were government employees, and 19% were self-employed.

Graph 4 - Monthly income of Single mothers



(Sources Field Research 2020)

Average monthly income lies between Rs. 10000- 15000, but 24% of women have less than Rs.5000 monthly income. And 20% of women have a monthly income above Rs.20000. Only 19% of total participants stated that the monthly income is sufficient for day today family needs. About half of these women receive some kind of reparation from their husbands to manage the family needs. More than 10% rent some property to earn an income, and 27% receive some kind of financial help from the other family members.

Regarding the cost of education of children, 41% have reported that they need between Rs.5000-10000 monthly for that, while 31% have reported they need between Rs.10000-15000 for that. But 6% have reported they need less than 5000 for their children's education overall. And also about 4% need more than Rs.20000 monthly for children's education. When looking at the type of subsidies they receive, majority (44%) receive Samurdhi assistance from the government. 25% receive some kind of scholarship for their children. And 31% receive a widowed salary monthly. 59% of these families reported that they suffer from debt burden. Type of debt they owe can be categorized as bank debt, informal debt, and organizational debt. From the families which suffer from debt, 37.5% have bank debt to pay while another 37.5% have informal debt borrowed via informal ways to pay. The remaining 25% have organizational debt to pay.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The meaning of single mother family is a family where only mother has to fulfil the financial, material and emotional needs of the children, without the help of someone else. In this syndicate, the main objective is to discuss about the single mothers of Sri Lanka and identify economic problems faced by mothers. In this respect, family background of single mothers, causes for single motherhood, the on-going fact of single motherhood and how it affect not only the themselves but also family.

Most subjects considered of the survey were between an age 34-41. Which is 37% the least participation percentage was from age group 18-25? From the subject considered, 3/4 was Sinhalese. Tamil and Muslims were 13% and 11% respectively. These percentages match with the respective ration of country.

From the women participated in this study 1/3 of women were widowed, 30% were divorce and 20% were not legally separated and 17% of women were not legally separated. Department of census and statistics in Sri Lanka 2012 reported, female population by current marital status and widowed population had been increase as a percentage of 6.8% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012).

An interesting fact found 98% of women were married under 24, while 41% were married under 18% the age when married is considerably young in these women compared to the average marrying age in the country. Under age marriages and pregnancy causes for the large number of problem.

The most of participant reported they have less education qualification. Single fathers are often better educated than single mothers, have higher status and higher paying occupation, and a higher rate of employment (Hanson, 1985). In the United States, evidence suggests that children from single mother families due to the death of father show similar levels of educational and occupational attainment compared to those from two parent families, which are significantly higher than the levels of those from divorced single mother families (Bosman and Louwes, 1998).

#### V. SUGGESTION

- Single mothers should be aided for self-employment to uplift their economy.
- Authorities should be conduct counselling programs for single mothers.
- Government should be provided necessary legal assistance to gain inheritances from their fathers who have been divorced, passed away and separated.
- Programs should be started to prevent youngsters of single families of getting addicted to drug and other anti-social activities.
- There must be programs which will improve the talents of single parented children.
- Starting the lows against teenage marriages in Sri Lanka.
- Educating the women importance of getting to legal marriages.

- Educating about spending a happy and peaceful marriage life.
- Making sure women will get equal rights in front of each and every legal organization.
- Improving the educational background of women in Sri Lanka.
- Launching project for the development of female headed households in Sri Lanka.
- Conducting programs to improve the nutrition of single mothers and their children.
- Introduce counselling programmes to improve mental well-being of single mothers in Sri Lanka.
- Conducting special medical camps for women in Sri Lanka.

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