

The Effects of Urbanisation in the Mental Health of Women

Dr. Jayashree Mishra
HIOD-Psychology, FM Autonomous College, Balasore

ABSTRACT:

The role of social factors especially the rural -urban settings and higher and lower socio economic status are more pertinent in the anxiety and inferiority feelings of women. This paper aims to discuss the quantitative and qualitative differences exist among various categories of women. Implications of findings are discussed in the light of current emphasis on development of intervention programmes to enhance the mental health of women.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is linked to self confidence, self esteem, self respect and right attitude to face life. In the present scenario society is witnessing an increase in mental illnesses and in this regard it is worthwhile to study the women as a social group who are exposed to constant stresses imposed by the society in their life span. Women constitute one half of our population but their collective status in society is inversely proportional to their numerical strength. It is difficult to separate the sociological differences from the psychological ones as the sociological factors routed in the social and cultural environment of an individual. In this regard it is meaningful to study women as a social group.

Traditionally they are trained for the role of homemaker, wife and mother. They are taught to channelize their mental agonies. They are trained to be independent, Not very assertive and be more or less in a state of condition of helplessness even if as an adult. There are numerous demands put on them during various stages of their lives in terms of education, employment, marriage, pregnancies and child birth. Even some times they have no choice to decide things at home or about themselves. Due to the effect of urbanisation, while they are liked to be seen in traditional womanly roles, they are also increasingly being called upon to take up new non conventional roles which were traditionally outside their domain. Research studies indicate that due to the effect of urbanisation women are getting sensitized about their potentialities and coming out of home to take up jobs or to be financially independent. They are trying to prove their worth in this male dominated society

Simultaneously they are expected to play the role of a wife, and mother, run the family, care the sick relatives and work outside the house. These multiple roles along with domestic violence, sexual violence, financial exploitations and increased social conditioning create a feeling of inadequacy and helplessness. Such factors ultimately lead to various psychological disorders such as schizophrenia, anxiety neuroses, manic depressive psychosis and other forms of mental problems.

METHODS

In this regard a study was conducted where hundred women were randomly selected from two different settings such as rural and urban settings. They were crossed with two levels of socioeconomic status such as high and low socio economic status.

The age group of the subjects were twenty (20) to Sixty (60) years with the mean age group of 38.22 years. The subjects were divided in to rural and urban domicile on the basis of the place of residence and the population of that place.

They were administered Hamilton Anxiety Scale and Inferiority Questionnaire. The Hamilton Anxiety scale constitutes of 14 items each of which is rated 0 to 4 on an chord severity scale. The reliability of the scale is fairly good.

The inferiority questionnaire consists of twenty questions which elicit either "yes" or "no" answer. Most of the questions indicate the presence of inferiority feelings when they are answered positively. Besides these the socio demographic data were collected from the samples to know their social and cognitive aspects.

RESULTS

Table-1 – Mean Anxiety Scores

Groups	Low SES		High SES		Combined	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Rural	26.72	4.16	21.92		24.32	4.55
Urban	39.76	6.35	24.6		32.18	9.22
All	33.24	8.46	23.26			

As shown by table-1, urban women reveal greater anxiety than their rural counterparts ($M=332.18$ and 24.32 respectively)

Table-2 – Mean Inferiority Scores

Groups	Low SES		High SES		Combined	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Rural	56.64	13.02	65.28	10.2	60.95	12.37
Urban	69.23	15.17	58.8	12.68	64.01	14.80
All	62.93	15.37	62.03	11.85		

From table-2 it is evident that urban low socioeconomic status women exhibit more inferiority than their urban high SES and rural counterparts.

From the correlation analysis mentioned in table -3 it is evident that income is negatively and significantly associated with anxiety in case of urban settings, $r(48) = -0.56, P < 0.01$. Another interesting feature of the analysis of association involves the significant positive relationship between income and anxiety in case of low socioeconomic status level, $r(48) = 0.52, P < 0.1$ (table .3). However anxiety is found to be unrelated to income in case of rural setting and high socio economic status level when considered separately $r(48) = -0.27, n.s$ and $r(48) = 0.23, n.s$. Similar pattern of results is also found in case of all the participants $r(98) = 0.09, n.s$ (table.3)

Table-3- Correlation Coefficient between Income and Anxiety

Groups	
Rural Participants (N=50)	-0.27
Urban Participants (N=50)	-0.56 **
Total Low SES (N=50)	0.52**
Total High SES (N=50)	0.23
All Participants (N=100)	0.09

** $P < 0.01$

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

From the analysis of data it was found that

- Urban women experience significantly greater anxiety than their rural counterparts
- Low SES women feel more anxious than the high ESE women
- In the urban setting when inferiority feeling of women increases, anxiety also increases
- In case of urban settings most of the women experiences free floating anxiety
- Nuclear family plays a significant role in developing psychological disorders in case of urban settings.
- All the women from the rural and urban settings as well as low and high Socioeconomic status level complaint of disturbed sleep.
- Tobacco chewing is commonly found in urban society
- The urban respondents exhibited the common psychological symptoms like phobia, homelessness, worthlessness, sin or guilt.

DISCUSSIONS

From the study it is evident that urban women experience greater anxiety than their rural counterparts. It may be due to the reason that in urban society people found indifferent to each other. There is less intimacy and closeness. Besides this, due to busy life style, they don't get much leisure time or self recreation, which in turn creates emotional problems on their part. The mechanical, materialistic and progressive life style keeps the urban women under more stress and anxieties compared to their rural counterparts.

The nuclear family system which is more prevalent in the urban society imposes threat on the status of women. As the children grow, they demand more independence, leave the home for studies or occupation. As a result, joint family concepts gradually dismantle and create identity crisis in case of women. The social controls like customs, traditions, religion are effective in controlling the anxiety in women in rural settings. But such controls are not much practised in the urban society.

The research findings reveal that in the urban settings as the income increases, anxiety decreases. It may be due to the reason that, in urban setup; higher income leads to comfortable life style which ultimately leads to lower level of anxiety.

Whereas less income leads to poverty and increasing working hour of women in the house. Finally family peace and happiness in the hours of grief and tension is disturbed and it ultimately makes the women more vulnerable to psychological traumas.

Contrary to the expectations, the result indicates that, in Low SES level, as the income increases, anxiety also increases. It may happen due to status incongruence. In general status incongruence occurs when improved economic conditions make it possible for people to earn higher incomes than before, but not to command a matching amount of honour because of their occupations or their cast, race or religion. Therefore certain actions or steps must be taken by the society or Government to provide counselling's and therapies to the women through schools, colleges, workplaces and communities to prevent the onset of mental problems.

The problems can be met with a women friendly approach. The single and divorced women face lots of psychological problems. They should be aware of their legal status and services. Policies and programmes must be made to meet the needs of urban as well as rural women. Intervention programmes must be generated to meet the multiple and complex needs challenges, inequalities and barriers that are faced by women in their path towards fulfilment.

Finally it can be said that the routine of women's lives render them at risk to experience more stress than do men. This reflects the greater number of social roles. Women fill as wife, mother, daughter, employee and beyond that the reproductive role of bearer, producer, reeder and nurture of children. In this regard they must be treated carefully as they are the milestones of the society.

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