

Social Work in India

Indigenous Approaches and Models

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CONCEPT PUBLISHING COMPANY PVT. LTD.
NEW DELHI-110059



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ISBN-13: 978-93-88937-49-8

First Published 2020

Published and Printed by

Concept

Since 1974

Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.

A/15-16, Commercial Block, Mohan Garden,

New Delhi-110059 (INDIA)

T: 91 11 25351460, 91 11 25351794

E: publishing@conceptpub.com; W: www.conceptpub.com

Cataloging in Publication Data--Courtesy: D.K. Agencies (P) Ltd. <docinfo@dkagencies.com>

Social work in India : indigenous approaches and models / edited by Bishnu Mohan Dash,
Mithilesh Kumar, Siddheshwar Shukla.

pages cm

Contributed articles.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 9789388937498

1. Social work education—India. 2. Indigenous peoples—Services for—India. I. Dash,
Bishnu Mohan, editor. II. Kumar, Mithilesh (Assistant professor of social work), editor. III.
Shukla, Siddheshwar, editor.

LCC HV11.8.I4S63 2020 | DDC 361.3071154 23



Social Work Intervention with Single Parent Families

A Case Study of Half-Widows in Kashmir

Sumeera Nazir and Dr. Shazia Manzoor

Introduction

A single parent sometimes called a solo-parent is a parent that is not living with a spouse or partner, who has most of the day-to-day responsibilities in raising the child or children. A single parent is usually considered the primary caregiver. The primary caregiver is the parent the child have residency with the majority of the time (Dowd Nancy, 1997). If the parents are separated or divorced, children live with their custodial parent and have visitation or secondary residence with their non-custodial parent. (Benokraitis, Nijole, 2012, 2011, 2008). Single parenthood is a phenomenon that has always been in existence and is as old as mankind. The demographics of single parenting show a general increase worldwide in children living in single-parent homes (Jayson, Sharon, 13 May, 2009). Single parenting has become an accepted norm in the United States and is an accepted trend found in many other countries. Debates concerning issues bothering on single-parent households, and more have risen. Recently, the numbers of single-parent families have increased drastically and it is gaining a global dimension. Parenthood is challenging enough even under the best of conditions. So, being a single parent in our society is tasking, to say the least. This is because, with one parent, the challenges are multifaceted. Single parenting in our society has been the focus of much interest and research in recent years. (Chiemelie Ezeobi, 2011). According to Funmilayo

Oriyomi (2011), a communicator, "The effect of single parenting are far reaching because it does not only affect the parents, it also affects the children. In fact, the effects are more devastating on the part of the children because single parenthood leaves them with deep scars. Being a single parent is a very tough and challenging task. Many of the problems that single parents have are similar to those of the two parents' family, but these problems seem more difficult to bear or manage when the home is being tutored by only one person. For example, all children feel hostile towards their parents as they grow up and try to be independent. But in a situation, where the anger and rebellion are all directed towards one person, it may seem worse, if there is only one to bear it, not for the two to share (single parent impact on children). The role of the single parent is challenging one especially when the family is headed by a woman. The problem of a single mother is linked with the upbringing of children, their future and setting down in life. 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. In the social sphere, majority of single mothers tried to avoid attending social gatherings and had changed their dressing style due to depression. They had developed poor food and eating habits. Majority of the single mothers found it hard to maintain discipline among the children due to the absence of male members. The mothers complained about loneliness, traumatic and depression and found it difficult to handle the responsibility of childcare and to establish a routine for her children.

The phenomenon of enforced disappearances emerged in Kashmir after 1989, after the outbreak of armed conflict gave rise to single-parent families. The heavily deployed security forces (more than six hundred thousand, the highest number of the army during peacetime anywhere in the world) during its campaign against combatant Kashmiris have resorted to different forms of human right violations like extra-judicial executions, custodial deaths, custodial torture, rapes, forced labour, including the Disappearances. As security forces suspect every Kashmiri so due to promiscuous arrests of the non-combatant Kashmiris and subsequent tortures has resulted in the disappearances from last 11 years. People from all spheres of life and different age groups, from 10 years to seventy years after their arrests have got disappeared. Militants, their sympathizers, political activists and large number of innocent persons have become the victims of Enforced Disappearances (APDP, n.d.).