SINGLE MOTHERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study aims to examine the awareness of assistance policies and schemes for women among single mothers. Therefore, the current study concentrates on demographic profile of single mothers and to examine the awareness, accessibility, and effectiveness of schemes and welfare policies among rural single mothers.

Methods: The research employed a quantitative and descriptive research design to examine 230 rural single mothers from the Gudiyattam Division, Vellore District. The responses are gathered using semi-structured questionnaires and interview schedules, and the data are analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Result and Conclusion: The study rejects the hypothesis because education plays a significant role in shaping an individual's pursuit of knowledge about the various welfare schemes instituted specifically for rural women. As a result, women must be educated at the grassroots level about these welfare schemes and policies for better survival in society, and policymakers must implement steps to raise the level of education for women in the nation.

Implications of the research: Awareness of the scheme is a crucial metric for determining the success of any programme. Even the utilisation rate of the programme is extremely low. Therefore, researching large samples of single mothers is necessary to identify their level of awareness and to benefit from the schemes.

Keywords: awareness, accessibility, effectiveness, policies, welfare schemes, rural single mothers.

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PERSPECTIVAS DAS MÃES SOLTEIRAS SOBRE PROGRAMAS DE BEM-ESTAR SOCIAL PARA MULHERES EM TAMIL NADU

RESUMO

Objetivo: O estudo visa examinar a conscientização das políticas e esquemas de assistência para mulheres entre mães solteiras. Por isso, o presente estudo se concentra no perfil demográfico das mães solteiras e para examinar a conscientização, acessibilidade e eficácia dos esquemas e políticas de bem-estar entre mães solteiras rurais.

Métodos: A pesquisa empregou um projeto de pesquisa quantitativo e descritivo para examinar 230 mães solteiras rurais da Divisão Gudiyattam, Distrito de Vellore. As respostas são coletadas por meio de questionários semiestruturados e agendamentos de entrevistas, e os dados são analisados por meio do Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Resultado e Conclusão: O estudo rejeita a hipótese porque a educação desempenha um papel significativo na formação da busca do indivíduo pelo conhecimento sobre os diversos esquemas de bem-estar instituídos especificamente para as mulheres rurais. Como resultado, as mulheres devem ser educadas ao nível das bases sobre esses esquemas de bem-estar e políticas para uma melhor sobrevivência na sociedade, e os legisladores devem implementar medidas para elevar o nível de educação das mulheres na nação.

Implicações da pesquisa: A conscientização do esquema é uma métrica crucial para determinar o sucesso de qualquer programa. Até mesmo a taxa de utilização do programa é extremamente baixa. Portanto, é necessário pesquisar grandes amostras de mães solteiras para identificar o seu nível de conhecimento e beneficiar dos regimes.

Palavras-chave: conscientização, acessibilidade, eficácia, políticas, esquemas de bem-estar, mães solteiras rurais.

1 INTRODUCTION

In India, women are the most vulnerable. Especially women in rural India are confined between four walls, responsible for domestic chores, children, and day-to-day expenses. Globally, single-parent families have skyrocketed, with single mothers outnumbering single-father families by three-quarters (Garfinkel, 1986; Bernardi, 2018). When comparing single mothers and fathers, mothers were significantly more likely to be in a crisis. Additionally, to prove that, the Times of India (2019) highlighted the report from UN Women that 13 million Indian households are solely headed by single mothers. Whereas, a report from National Family health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019 – 2021, In Tamil Nadu, 52% of all families residing in rural areas, 18% of the total population lives in households headed by women, and nearly one-quarter of all households (24%) are managed by women. Increasingly, women are taking over the role of household head, and these households are called female-headed households (FHHs).
The term single mother was defined as widowed women, single unwed mothers, separated or divorced women, and unmarried women who had adopted children (Zakaria, 2019; Zehol, 2020). In the current study, the term "single mother" was operationalized solely in the context of divorced, widowed, and separated women. Although unmarried women fall under the category of single mother, unmarried women were not included as participants in the current study because their lives, experiences, and marital relationships differ from those of the other groups of single women who have been married at least once.

In Indian society, though single parents possess an equal amount of responsibility for motherhood and child rearing as any other person, they are continually subjected to a more significant number of demands and sources of pressure than married mothers. The identity of a single mother is frequently associated with disgrace, embarrassment, breakdown, and insecurity. Frequently, single mothers are viewed as promiscuous. Since single mothers have been stigmatised, they have been forced to deal with feelings of pity, accusations, reproach, and exclusion in various settings, such as schools, workplaces, courts, welfare offices, and public transport. Single women in India often conceal their status as single mothers as a result of social stigma. In addition to that, social events or rituals may not appeal to them because they would be viewed negatively by others so that they may avoid them.

Even though young women have a higher education aspiration, their families, particularly those from less affluent backgrounds and rural areas, are prone to discourage them from pursuing an education. Instead, they are coerced or compelled to marry due to gender ideas and associated obligations (Lamb.S., 2022). Thus, many women have become single mothers at a young age due to a multitude of circumstances, and they face plenty of obstacles. Being a single mother can be difficult, but living in a rural region can provide special challenges. In many rural areas, access to higher education is limited, making it hard for such women to enhance their financial position. This lack of education can also keep people in poverty because they may not have the skills or credentials to get better-paying jobs. The tendency for negative perceptions and prejudice against rural single mothers amplifies these obstacles. Gender stereotypes and societal norms may make it difficult for these women to find acceptance in their communities, especially if they are single mothers.
Single mothers frequently experience a sense of rootlessness and an absence of individuality (Kotwal N., 2009). They encounter economic stressors due to insufficient wages, debt, and a lack of government financial policies (Hashim, 2015). Though women occupied half of the population, the accessibility of the schemes was greatly diminished. However, they are remarkably unaware of different professional fields due to a lack of education, limited capabilities, and limited employment opportunities. Compared to rural women, urban women tend to be more contemporary and embrace modern concepts of individuality and freedom (Swain, 2005). When compared to urban areas, rural widows' conditions are deplorable; their parents, in-laws, and society forbid them from seeking employment. Therefore, rural women are at risk in the workforce (Chandra, 2011).

According to Modise A.M. (2015), rural single parents believed that they were lacking in a variety of aspects, including relational, socioemotional, material, and other facets. Regularly, single mothers have to balance childcare responsibilities and budgetary restraints. Therefore, many governments have adopted different policies and programmes to assist single mothers in light of these difficulties. Unfortunately, single mothers are frequently unaware of the resources available due to a lack of knowledge or having trouble accessing them. Besides that, there have been improvements in girls' access to education, and many rural women continue to lack access to secondary education due to the traditional bias against educating girls and the economic crisis. So, rural single mothers face enormous obstacles to obtaining welfare schemes and policies from the government and non-governmental organisations. By the way, they should benefit from the government's welfare programmes designed to educate them; otherwise, these programmes would be mere newspaper executions with no real effect.

Despite these challenges, Indian women have made little progress in recent years. India currently has no laws that explicitly safeguard single mothers or their children.

To improve the living conditions of rural people, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) under the Government of India initiated several programmes through the Planning Commission of India, such as

- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
- Pradhan Mandhri Vikas Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)
- Support for Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
- Working Women's Hostel (Shakthi Niwas)
• Mahila E-Haat
• PM Street Vendor Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM Svanidhi)
• Vocational Training Programme
• Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

All of these different initiatives are working towards the same goal, which is to strengthen rural women and bring them into the development process. Their knowledge of such programmes varies according to their age, marital status, level of education, employment, income, and so on. Due to a lack of training and education, moral support, and government backing in the relevant disciplines, single mothers from remote regions be unsuccessful in entrepreneurship (Roddin, 2011). So, rural single mothers are the primary focus of the research because, unlike their urban counterparts, they are struggling to benefit from welfare programmes due to ignorance and significant cultural and religious stereotypes. However, there is a questionable situation that arises regarding whether or not rural single mothers are aware of the schemes as well as the extent to which the initiatives have been implemented in rural areas. Therefore, here the focus of the study is to explore how rural single mothers perceive policies and welfare programmes.

The following objectives are driving the current study:

i) To study the demographic profile of single mothers

ii) To examine the awareness, accessibility, and effectiveness of schemes and welfare policies among rural single mothers.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Ministry of Family, Women, and Community Development (KPWM, 2019) introduced the Empowerment Action Plan (2015–2020), established on June 3, 2015. The plan focuses on empowerment, social well-being, and research development for single mothers. In the same way, the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development (Talib, 2020) is a major force in promoting the social welfare of women through agencies that support single mothers in Malaysia. However, survival strategies necessitate both internal and external support networks. Internal support is provided by family and friends, while external support is provided by welfare institutions, government groups, and the community (Edin, 1997). Also, in recent years, many women have
attempted to begin or advance their careers, but they have relinquished their jobs in order to fulfil their family responsibilities (Kumar & Selvam, 2023).

Microcredit programmes like Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), created a special scheme for single mothers to engage in income-generating activities (Roddin, 2011). In contrast, the factors behind the low enrolment rate of single mothers in educational programmes were analysed, as were existing policies and laws that serve to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of single mothers (Mahat, 2019). (Mewat Development Society, 2016) has conducted an evaluation study based on a situational analysis of Muslim widows in Delhi, Bhopal, Lucknow, Hyderabad, and Mewat to enlighten various issues such as physical, psychological, economic, and social problems in our Indian society. The study found that a lack of awareness about the schemes and welfare available to widows leads to more vulnerability in society.

Consequently, rural women were aware of the government's welfare schemes and policies, but overall, women's empowerment was less prevalent in India (Sharma, 2021). A study was conducted to determine the extent to which self-help groups (SHGs) empower rural women. Women became emancipated after joining self-help groups, which had a beneficial effect on their livelihoods and level of empowerment across four parameters, including cultural and social-psychological, financial, legal, and socio-political (Kumawat, 2018).

Lack of knowledge and negative perceptions of single mothers are the reasons for not registering for the assistance programmes provided by the government and non-government agencies (Rahman, 2017). Moreover, single mothers lack business skills; they start small businesses to earn independently, but they never continue due to a lack of interest and motivation in the business field (Ismail, 2016). However, the improvements in financial development and women-centred policies are anticipated to have a substantial effect on the social position and well-being of single mothers, who are traditionally regarded as marginalised groups (Rousou, 2013). Despite the fact that women can start their own enterprises, a lack of knowledge about the numerous government initiatives can impede their success (Anandharaman & Rangasamy, 2023).

The central and state governments have implemented different novel schemes for women's empowerment. However, due to a lack of awareness, minority women are merely taking advantage of a few government-sponsored programmes (Bandiera, 2014). In many states, the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) includes a pension for
widows but not for other categories of single women, such as divorced women, never married women, and separated women (Gandhi.K., 2016). In particular, the majority of women from rural regions have minimal work possibilities due to their restricted capacity to compete for jobs and low levels of education (Omar, 2014). As a result, the Government of India implemented a number of programmes aimed at improving the general welfare of the population, with a particular focus on women and young girls. Even so, the programmes do not reach the intended population for a variety of reasons, including a general lack of knowledge about them as well as widespread instances of corruption (Sarker, 2017).

Even after a comprehensive search, the researcher was unable to locate a great deal of literature on single mothers. Particularly in the Indian context, there is an insufficiency of published material on single mothers and their children, mostly written from a foreign standpoint; therefore, this study demonstrated the scenario of single mothers, and suggested to improve the standard of living of rural single mothers and eradicate their ignorance, it is necessary to implement welfare initiatives effectively.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 STUDY DESIGN AND STUDY AREA

The study employed quantitative and descriptive research design to explore rural single mothers (N=230) through a Multi stage random sampling technique from the Gudiyattam Division, Vellore District. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the participants, followed by an interview schedule. Except for unmarried mothers, all participants were single mothers, including widows, divorced, and separated women. The inclusion criteria for the present research are single mothers between 21 and 50 years of age.

3.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

After the development of this research, a synopsis was drafted for formal approval from the Institutional Ethical Committee for Human Subjects (IECH). In the meantime, the researcher addressed the study with externals and board members. So, the Institutional Ethical Committee for Studies on Human Subjects (IECH) at the Vellore Institute of Technology has approved the study (Ref. No. VIT/IECH/XIII/2023/14). Finally, the data was gathered from single mothers who consented to participate in this study voluntarily.
3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS software, which stands for IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The data were analysed using various statistical tools, including frequency charts, cross-tabulation, and chi-square.

3.4 HYPOTHESIS

H0: There is no significant impact of demographic variables (age, education) on awareness, accessibility of schemes, and policies among rural single mothers.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the respondents in the study area, including their age, level of education, Religion, the total number of children, and reason for being single, is shown in

Table: 1 Demographic profile (N=230)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Frequency &amp; %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 21 – 30</td>
<td>38(16.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 31 – 40</td>
<td>140(60.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 41 – 50</td>
<td>52(22.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>17(7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary (upto 5th)</td>
<td>28(12.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (upto 8th)</td>
<td>33(14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary (upto 10th)</td>
<td>42(18.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary (upto 12th)</td>
<td>42(18.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and above</td>
<td>68(29.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>187(81.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>33(14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>10(4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Children</strong></td>
<td>99(43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>105(45.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17(7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3</td>
<td>9(3.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason for being Single Motherhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>145(63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>59(25.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>26(11.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data
The above table indicates that the majority (61%) of the respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40, and nearly a quarter are between the ages of 41 and 50. Based on their education level, only 68% of rural single moms had a college degree or higher, while the rest only went as far as high school. In this study, one-third of the people who answered the questions were Hindu, 14% were Christians, and 4% were Muslims. Also, half of the respondents who answered had two children, while 43% had only one. Undoubtedly, 63% of single mothers were widowed, 26% were divorced, and 11% were separated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fully aware</th>
<th>To certain extent</th>
<th>Not all aware</th>
<th>Fully ignorant</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>13 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>5 (16.7%)</td>
<td>10 (33.3%)</td>
<td>13 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>5 (14.3%)</td>
<td>28 (85.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>29 (66.7%)</td>
<td>9 (22.2%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>24 (55.6%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and above</td>
<td>17 (26.7%)</td>
<td>46 (66.7%)</td>
<td>5 (6.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (8.0%)</td>
<td>95 (40.0%)</td>
<td>80 (34.0%)</td>
<td>38 (18.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

It is inferred from the above cross-tabulation that 40% of single mothers were only partially aware of schemes and policies; 34% of them lacked knowledge of welfare policies; 18% of respondents agreed that they were completely ignorant of schemes implemented for women, and 8% of educated respondents agreed that they were fully aware of schemes available to single mothers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>196.614 *</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>198.669</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors (2023)

The output of the chi-square test indicated that the significant value is.000; if Pearson's p-value is less than 0.05, then the null hypothesis is rejected; therefore,
education has a substantial impact on rural single mothers' awareness of programmes and government initiatives.

Table 4: Cross-tabulation between age * process and procedure are easy to access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

The aforementioned cross-tabulation of age and scheme process identifies that fifty per cent of the respondents agreed that the process for getting benefits is easily accessible. In comparison, the other fifty per cent of single mothers could not access it due to the length of the procedure.

Table 5: Chi-square test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>6.314</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>6.411</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors (2023)

The chi-square test no. 2 revealed that the significant value is lesser than the p-value of 0.05, stating that there is a significant association between the demographic variable age and the process and procedure for obtaining the policies and schemes.

The results of Table No. 1 indicate that most single mothers are between the ages of 31 and 40, and only 30% of respondents hold a higher education degree, indicating that most of them have only completed elementary school. In addition, nearly half of the single mothers had two children, and the majority were widows. 40% of single mothers were aware of schemes and policies to some extent, while the majority were oblivious to policies and welfare measures for women. Half of the respondents agreed that programmes and policies are easy to access, while the other half of single mothers stated that the application and receipt of benefits are difficult. Although other variables, such as religion, children, and the reason for being single, have less impact on illiteracy because education has the greatest impact. Whereas Religion also plays a significant role in shaping people's attitudes, but single mothers confront enormous obstacles and
restrictions due to their status as such. At last, the chi-square test indicated that the hypothesis is rejected because education plays a significant role in shaping an individual's pursuit of knowledge about the various welfare schemes instituted specifically for rural women. The study of single mothers demonstrates conclusively that educated mothers can access programmes and feel comfortable doing so when they are aware of the programmes and policies. In contrast, uneducated single mothers could not access the programmes and faced tough times facing reality and the external world.

Although there have been rapid improvements in people's living standards around the world, the conditions of single mothers remain deplorable in Indian society. A woman derives her social status from her husband. Thus, a drastic change in a woman's life after becoming a single mother disrupts her social environment and overall well-being. It is crucial to break the vicious cycle of "undesirable" images, and there is an urgent need to change the complete picture of women, especially single women. In India, many parents believe that educating their daughters wastes time. They made no money while schooling a girl child. They believe their daughter will marry and leave the family house one day. Women are meant to be under the custody of their fathers before marriage. They have to remain under the control of their spouse after marriage, subsequently under the supervision of their son, and in old age or widowhood, which is why they do not wish to invest in their daughter. Women are often denied an education due to superstitious beliefs and gender hierarchies, which creates a hostile situation for single mothers who are attempting to access external resources from the government.

For Instance, single mothers asserted that they are unaware of the social welfare department's assistance and that many of them have delayed receiving government assistance for years (Mahat, 2019). So, it is the major responsibility of the government to teach single mothers living in rural areas skills that will enable them to earn an income and prepare them for circumstances in which they would be expected to work. Ultimately, social and welfare assistance can help single mothers deal with their problems by meeting their many needs and giving them more power (Broussard, 2012; Hamid, 2013; Nelson, 2000). To empower women in rural areas, it is essential to provide them with opportunities to acquire and enhance skills that will assist single mothers in finding employment (Mulia, 2020). All women must sign up with the Social Welfare Department to get help for their children and job opportunities from government agencies (Mahat, 2019).
Life after the COVID-19 pandemic is complicated, particularly for single mothers who suffer from severe stress and trauma as a result of a lack of income-generating skills and diverse welfare programmes. Hence, there should be many large-scale programmes in rural areas to teach people about the actual value of women and the resources the government has set up to help them have bright futures. Single mothers don't always get enough credit, but they are unsung heroes whose hard work and dedication should be recognised. Family stability has been undermined, and the likelihood of poverty for single moms has increased as a result of the reduction in government assistance, the absence of accessible child care, the fall in employment prospects, and the lack of gender equity in wages.

Therefore, women's contributions significantly impact every society's socioeconomic development. In addition, women have an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the development programme. According to Swami Vivekanand's famous saying, "A bird cannot fly, stating that no society can make successful unless women join men in all activities, this remark has made it extremely evident how important women are in our society. Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, government regulations and policies alone are insufficient; in this regard, people's perspectives on single mothers must be altered, and traditional attitudes must be abandoned. So, the present paper recommends that the government impart awareness and employment opportunities for single mothers to uplift their living conditions as well as their economic situation and live a better life in society. The government must establish effective programmes that reach single mothers' doorsteps. NGOs and self-help groups must provide the necessary assistance for single mothers, and early intervention can be used to implement welfare programmes in rural areas to boost both the individual's and the nation's economies.

5 CONCLUSION

The progress of our nation is based on the emancipation of women. To transform the economic, social, cultural, and political context, the Indian government launched a variety of plans and programmes to advance women's status as equal partners. Unfortunately, these plans failed to be carried out due to a lack of public awareness. There are numerous plans and initiatives made by the government aimed at women, but there are no special welfare programmes for single mothers. Many rural women are still entirely
unaware of the initiatives, and they lack complete financial literacy. Generally speaking, more education increases opportunity, income, and versatility. Higher educational attainment may raise awareness of potential economic and social opportunities. Still, support from family, friends and the community would help single mothers to enjoy the freedom to implement a piece of knowledge into reality. Consequently, single mothers lack support, which prevents them from exploring their knowledge in society.

Meanwhile, the government of India has implemented many highly successful programmes to empower women in society. However, societal conversations, debate, promotion, and awareness are the areas that must be addressed to address the issue at hand, rather than only efforts and legislation. When these initiatives and programmes reach every nook and cranny of our country, our developing nation will become a developed and prosperous nation. To expand their outreach to single women in India, the state governments should consider forming partnerships with women’s organisations within their respective fields of work.

Policies that should be aimed at providing access to essential resources such as food, accommodation, healthcare, child care, education, and transportation can significantly impact the lives of rural single mothers and their children. To enhance the economic security and well-being of rural single mothers, these policies must be accessible, affordable, and tailored to their specific needs. In contrast, families and the government must play a substantial role in assisting single mothers. As a result, women must be educated at the grassroots level about these welfare schemes and policies for better survival in society, and policymakers must implement steps to raise the level of education for women in the nation. The researcher suggests that governments frequently provide information about these programmes through official websites, social service agencies, community centres, and public outreach campaigns to ensure single mothers are aware of them. Single mothers' primary duty is to research and inquire about available programmes to determine their eligibility and access the support they require.

6 FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The present study has provided a framework for discussing the awareness of government programmes for rural single mothers. Awareness of the scheme is a crucial metric for determining the success of any programme. Even the utilisation rate of the programme is extremely low. There is a lack of awareness about the programmes among
single mothers. It is essential for the development of a powerful nation that women are empowered in all areas. The old version of women's empowerment only focused on economic empowerment, but the new version also included political, social, educational, and psychological empowerment. This will be a valuable instrument to make the effort successful if great efforts are made to create a positive perception of the plan. Researching large samples of single mothers is necessary to identify problems and enhance their quality of life.
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