

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:  
ECO-2020-08032997

Volume: 8

Issue: 3

Month: June

Year: 2020

P-ISSN: 2319-961X

E-ISSN: 2582-0192

Received: 20.04.2020

Accepted: 20.05.2020

Published: 01.06.2020

Citation:  
Jegan, Annamalai. "A Study on Socio-Economic Conditions of Widows and Their Livelihood Status in Puducherry." *Shanlax International Journal of Economics*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2020, pp. 97–109.

DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.34293/economics.v8i3.2997>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

# A Study on Socio-Economic Conditions of Widows and their Livelihood Status in Puducherry

**Annamalai Jegan**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Economics*

*Kanchi Mamunivar Government Institute for PG Studies and Research (A), Puducherry, India*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0089-816X>

## Abstract

*In this paper, the main aim is to understand the socio-economic conditions of the widows and their livelihood in the Puducherry region in the Union Territory of Puducherry. The study has also been focusing on the widow's socio-cultural deprivation, social security, and social participation in the system. Data for the present study has been collected from 200 widows in both rural and urban of Puducherry area and hundreds of samples from each. The study reveals that there is no huge difference between the rural widows and urban widows are facing socio-economic problems, and widows are not much facing socio-cultural deprivation due to changing the attitude of modern society. The study also finds out that major determinants of livelihood of widows such as the monthly widow's pension and free rice providing by the state.*

**Keywords:** *Widow's socio-economic conditions, Livelihood, Widow's pension, Free rice, Remarriage fund.*

## Introduction

Widows are considered to be a marginalized group in India because they occupy a very low social status in society. They are discriminated against even by their family members, and they are restricted physically and socially. After the death of their husband, many of them struggle hard to manage their day to day life, and those who have children were the most affected in society. Widows suffer some of the most severe subjugation of their whole lives. Widowed women are harassed, abused, and denied land and livelihood. They have to face many kinds of deprivation, such as economic, social, cultural, and emotional. Most of the widows find it difficult to educate their children, and some of them had to also provide economic and moral support to their parents. The plight of the widow is indeed miserable for almost inevitably, it carries with it problems of ill-health, insufficiency of money, unemployment and strained social, relations with one's children and one's friends for both men and women (Bhat, 2004). Hence, it is important to study their living conditions after the deaths of their husband.

It is a well-known fact that Indian widows tend to face many difficulties and deprivations because of negative social attitudes towards them and social restrictions that are placed upon them and their activities. They are subject to patriarchal customs, religious laws, and widespread discrimination in inheritance rights. Many widows are suffering from abuse and exploitation by the hands of their family members, often in the context of property disputes. In many instances, women are denied automatic rights over the property of the dead spouse. Further contradictory widow remarriage is much less common than among male widowers, often explicitly or implicitly forbidden by local communities & prevalent cultural norms (Chandrasekar & JayatiGhosh, 2017)

The impact of widowhood is not equally felt by all age groups; age also has an important role in deprivation and insecurity of their life. It is observed that young widows suffer from social-psychological difficulties more than old-age widows. There is a specific problem faced by widows in the age group of 15-44, such as the need for education, the threat of violence, threat of sexual assault and rape, health problems, lack of nutrition, and financial security (Ramanama and Chaudhuri, 1986). It shows that young widows are not only suffering the basic needs and also suffering the insecurity and unsafe of their lives. On the other hand, the state has taken serious efforts for the upliftment of the widow's life through the implementation of policies and programs. Still, widows have not come forward in society with many kinds of deprivation.

### **Related Literature**

**Marty Chen and Jean Dreze (1995)** The authors argued that widows could not be dissociated from those of other single women, or indeed from those of women in general. Widows do experience special difficulties and deprivations, connected, among other things, with the restrictions that are imposed on their lifestyle and the persistence of negative social attitudes towards them. In the context of social science research, it is right to give attention to widowhood as a particular cause of deprivation. And, in the context of social action, it is right to organize and support widows in their specific demands (e.g., relating to pensions, property rights, and other entitlements). But this does not mean that action has to take the form of working for or with widows in isolation from other women. The studies and personal testimonies summarised in this paper amply demonstrate that there are intimate links between the predicament of widows and a wide range of patriarchal institutions such as patrilineal inheritance, patrilocal residence and the gender division of labor. The cause of widows must be seen as an integral part of the broader battle against gender inequalities.

**Anjali Chandra (2011)** This is an earnest attempt to describe the vulnerability of widows in India. The study is based on the review of various reports, literature and work are done on the status of widows in India try to throw light on the marginalized and

sympathetic situation of widows in India, how it is a neglected area in the field of social science research, its demographic portrayal and the question of social security of widows in the Indian context. The study concluded that by advocating an urgent need for policy intervention for positive inclusion of this largely excluded section in the society.

**Yoshihiko Kadoya and Ting Yin (2011)** The purpose of this research is to address the lack of a region-wide view of widow discrimination in India, the home of 42 million widows. This study analyzed the household data collected in face-to-face interviews from January to March of 2011 in six major Indian cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, and Hyderabad. The study revealed that widow discrimination does not prevail across the nation. That is, this research did not deny the existence of traditional widow discrimination in some areas, but demonstrated that this phenomenon does not represent the whole nation if we focus on the widow's old age and the treatment by their family.

**Anji and Velumani (2013)** This study examines the socio-economic condition of widows, particularly widows belonging to rural and urban in Dindigul District. The overall objective of the study is to analyze their contemporary issues and suggest measures for their betterment. The study has been drawn by using a random sampling method. The total sample selected for the study is 500 respondents, out of 9,850 widows in Dindigul District. In this study, widows from different age groups, caste groups, and geographical areas will be selected as respondents. The study has concluded that widowhood is an important factor that causes social customs for them. Rural widows are facing more problems than urban widows.

**Barnali Sharma and Usha Rani Boro (2017)** The authors argued that the term "widowhood" could be used for either sex. In common usage, both the sexes are termed as widowed. The treatment of widows around the world varies. Still, unequal benefits and treatment generally received by widows compared to those received by widowers globally have an issue of concern for social scientists. The purpose of the study is to showcase the life of the widows in comparison to its counterparts, the widowers in

India. It also focuses on the unequal treatment of the widows based on gender in the present society. The following paper is based on secondary data and not on any theoretical propositions.

**RadhikaKapur (2018)** The main purpose of this research paper is to understand widowhood in Indian society. The areas that have been taken into account are, widowhood perceived through the ages, socio-cultural and psychological conditions of widows, problems of widowhood, empowerment of widows, property rights of widows, the significance of religious places for widows and measures leading to improvement in the status of widows.

### Statement of the Problem

According to the 2011 census, the total population of Puducherry is 12, 47,953, of which male and female are 6,12, 511 and 6, 35,442 respectively. Out of the female population, 85,983 are widows in the pocket of Puducherry; it is significantly around 14 percent of the total female population. Therefore, the present study is planning to analyze, understand, and document the problems faced by the widows in the Union Territory of Puducherry, especially Puducherry region. The problems of widows are multifaceted; it should be holistically covering economic, social, cultural, and individual aspects in the system. The main aim of the study is more concentrates on the socio-economic conditions of widows and also find out what are the factors determinants of the widow's livelihood. There is also a need to analyze the causes of high widowhood in Puducherry. The study also concentrates on the impact of state welfare schemes and the improvement of their socio-economic conditions in the Puducherry region.

### Objectives of the Study

- To study is to analyses the socio-economic conditions of the widows in Puducherry.
- To find out the determining factors of their livelihood in Puducherry.
- To find out the causes for increasing the young-age widowhood in Puducherry.
- To look at the socio-cultural deprivation of widowhood and their social participation from a gender perspective.
- To understand the relationship between the

impact of welfare schemes for widows and the improvement of their socio-economic conditions.

### The Hypothesis of the Study

- Widows are living in poor socio-economic conditions of widows in Puducherry.
- Widow pension is not an important determining factor of their livelihood in Puducherry.
- Natural death is not an important factor for increasing the young age widowhoods in Puducherry.
- Widows are living in very poor conditions in terms of social security, socio-cultural activities, and social participation in Puducherry.
- There is a positive relationship between the impact of welfare schemes of widows and the improvement of their socio-economic conditions in Puducherry.

### The Methodology of the Study

The present study is both observational and descriptive. The study is a comparison between rural and urban areas of widows in Puducherry. This study is mainly based on primary data which are collected from sample respondents of widows in the Puducherry region in the Union Territory of Puducherry.

### Selection and Size of the Sample

The study has been drawn from both rural and urban areas, 100 samples from each pocket. A simple random sampling method was used to select the sample respondent of widows with the help of Anganwadi Centre (Staffs) under the Integrated Child Development Schemes (ICDS) in Puducherry.

### Primary Data

Primary data are collected systematically through the Personal Interview Method. The primary data are collected from sample widows in Puducherry using an Interview Schedule. The primary data are collected to obtain the required data on socio-economic conditions of widows, their difficulties in terms of livelihood and living conditions, family burden (caring of siblings and dependents), social discrimination, social isolation, sexual harassment,

etc. This primary data is also given importance to other dimensions that accessing the public welfare schemes for the welfare of widows and their expectation and grievance in the welfare scheme in the study area.

### Statistical Technique

The study is used statistical technique only by a simple ratio, percentage, and cross-tabulation method.

### Scope of the Study

The study is to understand the socio-economic conditions of widows who are a more vulnerable group among the women in the society. To find out that the factors determinant of livelihood of widows, both rural and urban areas in Puducherry region. Thus the study also examines the role of public policies for upliftment of widows and their children for survival.

### Limitations of the Study

This study has been based on information collected from sample respondents(widows) from the Union Territory of Puducherry that, more specifically, from the Puducherry region. Therefore, excluding its finding to other regions may have due to the difference in objective conditions prevailing in a different area.

### Analysis and Interpretation of data

Based on the major objectives of the study has been collected required information from sample respondents in the field with the help of Interview schedules. The sample can be divided into two groups, like rural and urban, 100 samples from each. Collected information analyses using statistical tools such as simple ratio and percentage with the help of drawing cross-tabulation. In the cross-tables, figures in parenthesis showed the percentage of the specific variable to the total.

Table 1 Show that the distribution of age-group of widows and place of birth in the sample. It reveals that around 45 percent of widows in 26-35 age – group and 53 percent are 36-40 age –group. Here, a very small proportion of widows under the age-group of 21-25. Out of these, around 45 percent and 55 percent are in the age-group of 26-35 and 36-40, respectively. Table 1 also shows that 91 percent of widows are living in Puducherry by birth, and the remaining 9 percent of widows are not born in Puducherry, they are noted as Non-Puducherry in the study. Out of these, 45.60 percent and 54.40 percent are Rural and Urban, respectively. There is remaining only 9 percent by the birth of non-Puducherry; out of these, 94.44 percent in the rural area and only 5.5 percent in the urban area.

**Table 1: Distribution of Sample Respondent by Region-Wise and Place of Birth**

Age-group of widows	Rural	Urban	Total	Birthplace of widow	Rural	Urban	Total
21 -25	2 (66.66)	1 (33.33)	3 (1.5)	Puducherry	83 (45.60)	99 (54.40)	182 (91.00)
26-35	46 (50.54)	45 (49.45)	91 (45.5)	Non- Puducherry	17 (94.44)	1 (5.56)	18 (9.00)
36-40	52 (49.05)	54 (50.94)	106 (53.0)		100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)				

The study can be classified into five social groups, such as Scheduled castes/scheduled tribes (SC/ST), Most Backward Classes (MBC), Other Backward Communities (OBC), Extreme Backward Communities (EBC) and Other Communities (OC). Accordingly, the sample of the study shows that SC/ST, MBC, OBC, EBC, and OC are 20, 51.50, 6, 20, and 5 percent, respectively. Of the total, around 51 percent of widows are in the pocket of MBC, out of these 52.43 percent and 47.53 percent are rural and

urban areas. Secondly, SC/ST and EBC are having a 20 percent sample of each. This study also reveals that around 97 percent of widows are Hindu, which is a major proportion of the state. There is remaining only 3 are other religion like Christians and others.

**Table 2: Distribution of Sample Respondents of Widows by Type of Family and Dependent Family**

Type of Family	Rural	Urban	Total
Joint family	9 (56.25)	7 (43.75)	16 (8.00)

Nuclear family	91 ( 49.46)	93 (50.54)	184 (92.00)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
By Living (with)			
Husband's family	57 (57.57)	42 (42.43)	99 (48.00)
Mother's family	11 (39.28)	17 (60.72)	28 (14.00)
Living separately	33 (43.43)	43 (56.57)	76 (38.00)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

The study has distributed the widows by type of family and dependent family like mother's family, mother-in-law, or live separately. Ninety-two percent of the widow is living with a Nuclear family, out of the total, 49.46 percent, and 50.54 percent of widows in the rural and urban areas. There is remaining only 8 percent of widows are living in the Join family system. It shows that people are living together in the joint family system has reduced in the system.

Table 4 also shows that widows are dependent on either their mother's family, mother-in-law's family, or live separately. Out of the total, 48 percent of widows are dependent on the mother-in-law family, and 38 percent are living separately who are not dependent on either mother's family or mother-in-law family. There is only 14 percent of widow dependent on the mother's family. It shows that married women are getting more right to live in the husband's family as per the law of inheritance In the study reveals that on the one hand, there is a high proportion of widows are living mother mother-in-law family in the rural area. On the other hand, high proportions of widows are living separately in the urban area.

**Table 3: Distribution of Sample Respondent by Nature of the Husband's Death**

Nature /causes of death of the widow's husband	Rural	Urban	Total
Diseases	21 (42.85)	28 (57.15)	49 (24.50)
Alcoholic/drinks	29 (49.15)	30 (50.84)	59 (29.50)

Organ failure	5 (50.00)	5 (50.00)	10 (5.00)
Suicide	14 (43.75)	18 (56.25)	32 (16.00)
Murder	0 (0.00)	5 (100.00)	5 (2.50)
Accident	22 (62.85)	13 (37.15)	35 (17.50)
Others	9 (90.00)	1 (10.00)	10 (5.00)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

Table 3 reveals that the nature/cause of death of the widow's husband in the sample, around 30 percent of death is by the drinking of alcohol in the first position. It has been both rural and urban as 42.85 percent and 57.15, respectively. Secondly, the causes of death by diseases, it is around 25 percent. Mostly, they are affected by jaundice due to alcohol addiction. Thirdly, it is around 18 percent of the death of husbands by accident. Fourthly, 16 percent of husbands are committing suicide. Organ failure, murder, and others (unpredictable) is jointly around 13 percent of the death of a husband in the sample. It shows that there are differences in nature/cause for widows' husband died, and they are equally significant for the causes of husband death such as diseases, drink, and suicide.

**Table 4: Distribution of Sample respondent of widows by Level of Education**

Level of Education	Rural	Urban	Total
Illiterate	25 (71.42)	10 (28.57)	35 (17.50)
Primary	27 (52.94)	24 (47.06)	51 (25.50)
Middle	18 (34.61)	34 (65.38)	52 (26.00)
Secondary	6 (27.27)	16 (72.73)	22 (11.00)
SSLC (Passed)	10 (52.63)	9 (47.36)	19 (9.50)
Higher Secondary (Passed)	11 (68.75)	5 (31.25)	16 (8.00)
And above	3 (60.00)	2 (40.00)	5 (2.50)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)



In table 4 explains the level of education of widows in rural and urban areas. Around 50 percent of widows got an education at the primary and middle school level. Out of these, on the one hand, 52.95 percent of rural widows and 47.05 of urban widows reached primary school education. On the other hand, widows are got an education at the middle school level in rural and urban are 34.62 65.38 percent, respectively. There are only around 10 percent and 8 percent of total widows passed in SSLC and Higher Secondary level. Out of the total, 17.5 percent of widows are illiterates, both rural and urban pockets. There is remaining only 5 percent of widows have attained education at degree and above level. It was explicit that around 50 percent of widows are achieved education at the primary and middle school level. Comparatively, rural widows are more achieved in SSLC/Higher Secondary education than urban widows in the sample.

**Table 5: Distribution of Sample Respondents of Widows by No. of Children and Other Dependents**

No. of Children	Rural	Urban	Total
No Child	1 (33.34)	2 (66.66)	3 (1.50)
One	22 (55.00)	18 (45.00)	40 (20.00)
Two	56 (47.46)	62 (52.54)	118 (59.00)
Three	18 (51.42)	17 (48.57)	35 (17.50)
Above	3 (75.00)	1 (25.00)	4 (2.00)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
Do you have any of Other Dependents?	Rural	Urban	Total
No	10 (47.61)	11 (52.39)	21 (10.50)
Yes	90 (50.27)	89 (49.72)	179 (89.50)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

Table 5 shows that the distribution of widows is having the number of children and also having the number of dependents to the widows. Around 60

percent of widows have two children, and 20 percent have only one child in the sample. Of the total, both rural and urban areas, widows are having two and one children around 50 percent of each, respectively. It reveals that the widows are more aware of family planning, which is more burdensome to run the family. Also, the government has been taken more effort to achieve family planning among people.

The study also estimated that widow is children attaining school and college education by gender aspect. Of the total, 89 percent of male children are going for school education, and also 11 percent of male children in college education. As like, around 87 percent of female children are going for school education, and the remaining 13 percent of female children are going to college for education. It reveals that there is no difference between male and female children for accessing school and college (higher) education. Another important point is noted that widows are a keen interest in providing education for their children. For that, they are spending more and concentrating on their children's education.

This table also shows that widows are burdening the number of dependents such as mother-in-law, father-in-law, or her's mother, father, or other members of the family. Of the total, 90 percent of widows are taking care of the dependents of her family. It applies to both rural and urban widows having the dependents in her family at a 90 percent level. It predicts that widows are needed the moral and social support from the old-age elders for their survival and security. There is remaining only 10 percent of widows are living without dependent even those who are not availing the dependent in the family.

**Table 6: Distribution of Sample Respondents by the Source of Income**

Source of Income	Rural			Urban		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
Are you doing any job?	18	82	100	12	88	100
Any other sources of Income to run your family?	96	4	100	93	7	100

Are you receiving any income from your dependents?	95	5	100	91	9	100
--	----	---	-----	----	---	-----

Table 6 shows that income sources of widow both rural and urban areas in the sample, 82 percent of rural widows, and 82 percent of rural widows and 88 percent of urban widows are doing the job and their major source of income. There is no other source of income to both rural and urban widows, 96 and 93 percent, respectively. Another important point is noted that 95 percent of rural widows and 91 percent of urban widows are not receiving any income from their dependent. In the case of source, there is no huge difference between rural and urban widows in income.

**Table 7: Distribution of Sample Respondents by Type/Nature of the Job**

Type /nature of Job	Rural	Urban	Total
Maid/Servant	10 (33.80)	32 (66.20)	42 (24.80)
Cottage industries	12 (54.54)	10 (45.46)	22 (12.94)
Company/Industries	16 (50.00)	16 (50.00)	32 (18.83)
Construction worker	12 (54.55)	10 (45.45)	22 (12.94)
Commercial worker	10 (45.45)	12 (54.55)	22 (12.94)
Agriculture labour	13 (100.00)	0 (00.00)	13 (7.65)
Self-Employed	9 (52.94)	8 (47.05)	17 (10.00)
<b>Total</b>	82 (100.00)	88 (100.00)	170 (100.00)

Table 7 reveals the distribution of widows by nature of jobs such as maid, labor in industries, construction labor, working in small cottage industries and commercial sector, agricultural labor, and self-employment. Firstly, around 25 percent of widows have occupied in maid/housemaid both rural and urban areas; they are 33.80 and 66. 20 percent, respectively. Second, widows are working in cottage industries like jute bag making, candle making, food items, it is around 18 percent, of the total 54.54 and

45.46 percent in the rural and urban pocket. Thirdly, many widows are working in the industrial sector like soap, medicine, etc. They are covered 16 percent, out of this, the rural and urban area is 50 percent of each. Fourthly, around 13 percent of each widow is working in both construction and commercial sectors; they are both rural and widows, 54.55 percent and 45.45 percent in construction and 45.45 and 54.55 percent in the commercial sector. There is only around 8 percent of widows are occupied in the agricultural sector in rural areas. Ten percent of widows are occupied self-employed like tailoring, bag making, petty shop, Tiffen shop, etc.; it is 52.95 percent and 47.05 of rural and urban widows, respectively. Comparatively, widows are working in an urban area greater than the rural area except in the agricultural sector. More than 25 percent of widows are working in both the construction and commercial sectors because there is needed unskilled women labor. There is only 10 percent are self-employed in both rural and urban areas.

The study explains that the monthly earnings of the widows in the sample can be classified into two income range 2000-4000 and 4001-800. It is around 98 percent of widows come under the income range of 2000-4000. Out of the total, 48.81 and 51.91 percent of widows are rural and urban areas, respectively. There is only very few (2%) percent of widows under the monthly earning range of 4001-8000. It predicts that most of them are earning a very low level in the total sample. Secondly, actually, in practice, women are getting low wages everywhere in general and here widows in particular.

**Table 8: Distribution of Sample respondent by Income and Savings**

Monthly Income group	Rural	Urban	Total
Low Income (< 6000 p.m.)	100 (50.50)	98 (49.50)	198 (99.00)
High Income (>6000 p.m.)	0 (0.00)	2 (100.00)	2 (1.00)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

Table 8 shows the distribution of widows by income group and saving habits; there is no huge variation in the income group level in the sample, it

is reasoned that the study has been taken two-income group viz low income and High Income. The low-income group represents less than rupees 6,000 per month, and the High-income group represents the greater than rupees 6000 per month. Here, 99 percent of widows come under the low-income group, which is less than the rupees 6,000 per month. Out of these, 50.50 percent and 49.50 percent are rural and urban widows, respectively. Remaining only one percent of widows are high-income groups that come under the urban pocket. It reveals that there is no low or high-income group in the sample, both rural and urban widows, almost all are living in the same pathetically conditions. Also, the study looks at the saving habits of widows in the sample; around 97 percent of widows are not saving habits, and remaining only 3 percent are having saving habits. Out of the total, 49.23 and 50.77 percent are not saving habits, and 71.42 and 28.58 percent are having saving habits. It reveals that there is no difference between the rural and urban widows of their saving habits because they are earning very low even they are struggling for the basic needs of day-to-day life.

**Table 9: Distribution of Sample Respondents Ownership of the House**

	Rural	Urban	Total
Rental/others	25 (31.64)	54 (68.36)	79 (39.50)
Own house	75 (61.98)	46 (38.02)	121 (60.50)
<b>Total</b>	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

Table 9 reveals that the number of widows is having/staying in their land or own house in the sample. Around 60 percent of widows are living in their own house, either mother-in-law house or mother's house. Out of this, 61.98 percent of rural and 38.02 percent of urban widows are living in their own houses. Remaining 40 percent of widows are living in Rental (or lees land) house; out of this, rural and urban widows are living in rental houses, 31.64 percent, and 68.36 percent, respectively. It explicit urban widows are living in a rental house greater than rural widows because rural people are holding a large size of land.

**Table 10: Distribution of Sample Respondents by Having Household Domestic Items**

Widow's household having Domestic items	Rural			Urban		
	Have	Not have	Total	Have	Not have	Total
Grinder	98	2	100	98	2	100
Refrigerator	44	56	100	48	52	100
Radio/Tape Recorder	6	94	100	3	97	100
Gas Stove	87	13	100	90	10	100
Mixie	97	3	100	95	5	100
Washing Machine	9	91	100	11	89	100
Television	85	15	100	93	7	100
AC	2	98	100	2	98	100
Communication (Mobile)	98	2	100	98	2	100

Table 10 explains that the widow has comfortable household domestic items to run her family like a grinder, refrigerator, radio/tape recorder, gas stove, mixie, washing machine, television, air-conditions, and communication items, strictly speaking, in the cellphone. Firstly, night-eight percent of both rural and urban widows are having grinders and mixie because it has freely given by the state government under the welfare scheme of the public. Secondly, Ninety percent of widows in both rural and urban

area has a television in their house. Television is one of the essential things for the entertainment of people. Thirdly, around 95 percent of both rural and urban widows are not having the Radio/ Tape recorder because it is very out of the model in society. By fourth, around only 90 and 98 percent of the rural and urban widow are not having the Washing machine and Air conditions because it is also considered very expensive and luxurious items to them. Finally, 98 percent of widow both rural and urban areas are



having mobile because nowadays it is essential items to communicate with each other. The table predicts that there is no difference between rural and urban widows have household domestic items; almost all are having essential household domestic items. Even though there is some shortage to access a few items like refrigerators, washing machines, etc. due to very expensive which are not capable of buying the commodities.

Table 11 below stat that health conditions of widows in the study, it reveals that around 72 percent of widows have good health conditions those who are not taken any treatment at present. There is only 28 percent of widows are facing different health problems. Out of these, the widows in the rural and urban areas are 53.14 and 46.86 percent, respectively. Whereas 42.10 and 57.90 percent of widows having health problems in the rural and urban areas. It is clearly explained that comparatively rural widows are more good health conditions than urban widows.

**Table 11: Distribution of Sample Respondent of Health Conditions and Taking Treatment**

Health Conditions	No/ Yes	Rural	Urban	Total
Do you have any health problem	No	76 (53.15)	67 (46.85)	143 (71.50)
	Yes	24 (42.10)	33 (57.90)	57 (28.50)
	Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
Taking Treatment	No/ Yes	Rural	Urban	Total
Are you taking treatment or not?	No	83 (52.54)	75 (47.46)	158 (79.00)
	Yes	17 (40.47)	25 (59.52)	42 (21.00)
	Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

Table 11 also explains the ill-health widows who are caring about health conditions through taking treatments. Of the total, widows are not taking treatment, 43.75 and 56.25 percent are rural and urban areas, respectively. It shows that rural widows

are taking treatment lower than urban widows. As like, widows are taken treatment in the rural and urban areas around 40 and 60 percent, respectively. It shows urban widows are taking more treatment than rural widows.

**Table 12: Distribution of Sample Respondents by Welfare Schemes**

Financial and other benefits under welfare schemes	Rural			Urban		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Are you receiving widow of pension	96	4	100	99	1	100
Is it more helpful	82	18	100	96	4	100
Are you receiving other benefits from Govt.	90	10	100	95	5	100
Receiving Free Rice	90	10	100	95	5	100

Table 12 shows the benefits of welfare schemes received by widows in the sample; almost all the widows are receiving a widow’s pension, and very few are not received the premium due to official procedures. Another important benefit is that receiving free rice through the Public distribution system it applies to all the people, but it is more helpful for the widow’s livelihood. 90 percent of rural widows and 95 percent of urban widows are receiving free rice for their livelihood. It predicts that both widow’s pension and distribution of free rice are major determinant factors of the livelihood of

widows in the Puducherry region.

Table 13 below reveals that around 85 percent of widows are ignorant and are not aware of the welfare schemes of widows and their children, such as widow remarriage, single/two girl child scheme, property rights/laws. There is only remaining around 15 percent of widows are aware of their schemes and rights. Comparatively, urban widows are more aware than rural widows in all these welfare. Another important point is noted that 98 and 96 percent of rural and urban widows do not know about the widow’s daughter’s marriage fund significantly.

**Table 13: Distribution Of Sample Respondents of Widows by Knowledge and Awareness About Other Welfare Schemes**

Knowledge and Awareness about Welfare schemes	Rural			Urban		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
1. Widow remarriage fund	86	14	100	76	24	100
2. Single and two girl child schemes	83	17	100	58	42	100
3. Widow's daughter marriage fund	98	2	100	94	6	100
4. Property rights and laws	85	15	100	88	12	100

Table 13 shows that widow is expecting form public policies such as help to children education, increase the widow's pension, a job opportunity in government and arrangement of loan for starting a business, etc. More than 50 percent of widows, both rural and urban areas, are expecting an increase in the amount of widow's pension. Around 27 percent of widows are demanding financial support for their children's education. There is remaining around 15 percent of widows, both rural and urban areas are expecting a government job from the state. Very few

percent of widows are asking loan arrangement for starting own business etc. It reveals that the widow's pension is more helpful to the widows for fulfilling their basic needs. Secondly, widows are given more importance to their children's education. Even though they are unable to spend the educational expenditure of their children such as notebooks, stationery, bus fare, etc, it is reasoned that widows are expecting through public policies for increasing the monthly widow's pension and supporting their children's education.

**Table 14: Distribution of Sample Respondents of Widows by Restriction to Wear Women Cultural Items**

Anybody restricted you to wear?	Rural			Urban		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
i) Pottu (Thilak)	79	21	100	98	2	100
ii) Flowers	79	21	100	95	5	100
iii) Bangles	79	21	100	98	2	100
iv) Jewels	78	22	100	97	3	100
v) Dressing pattern (code)	77	23	100	97	3	100

In traditional patterns, widows may shave their heads, wear only plain white clothing, and not wearing all any kind of non-widows items such as pottu (Thilak), flowers, bangles, and jewels, etc. The table reveals that around 80 percent of rural widows are not experienced any restriction to wear women's social customs such as pottu, flowers, bangles, jewels and dressing patterns,s and the remaining

20 percent of rural widows are facing restriction to wear such items. Whereas widows in the urban area, around 97 percent are not facing any restriction to wear women's social customs, and remaining only 3 percent are restricted. It shows that urban widows are better than rural widows to wear customary items due to modern urban life.

**Table 15: Distribution of Sample Respondent by Restriction to Attend Functions**

Restriction to attend functions	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
i) To attend relatives/ neighbor-hood functions	94	6	100	98	2	100
ii) To attend the village functions festivals	94	6	100	98	2	100
iii) To attend the religious and cultural functions	94	6	100	98	2	100

Widows are still discriminated against by their families and local communities to attend family

good occasions and functions. Such discrimination against widows has become a serious social issue as

the widow population in society. The study reveals that 94 percent of rural widows and 98 percent of urban widows are not facing restriction to attend functions. There is only 6 percent, and 2 percent of rural and urban widows are facing restrictions to

attend functions. It reveals that there is a changing socio-cultural attitude from the traditional customs and people as they move towards the modern approaches.

**Table 16: Distribution of Sample Respondent by Sexual Harassment**

Sexual Harassment	Rural			Urban		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
(i) Threatening of sexual abuse	97	3	100	88	12	100
(ii) Sexual abuse	97	3	100	88	12	100
(iii) Bad intention and approaches	96	4	100	88	12	100

Table 16 shows that sexual harassment of widows in both rural and urban areas, 97 percent of rural widows are not facing any kind of sexual harassment and tortures, and remaining only 3 percent are facing such harassment. On the contrary, 88 percent of urban widows are not suffering sexual harassment, and the remaining 12 percent are facing such problems. It reveals that comparatively, rural widows are facing problems lower than urban widows.

Widows of all ages and their children should not be treated as full and equal citizens on par with others in society. Various national laws and policies should be guided by the International Conventions to eliminate all forms of discrimination against Women and the Rights of the Children. Still, widows and their children are suffering without their rights. Accordingly, the study has been prepared in the interview schedule to assessing the attitude of

relatives/neighborhood through three statements as (i) To give respect and recognize you and your children (ii) To give co-operation and co-ordination with you and your children on village activities (iii) To treat equally your children on par with others. Table 17 reveals that the distribution of widows by attitudes of relatives and neighbors about widows and their children, around 75 percent of rural widows and 60 percent of urban widows, are answering the Good treatment. Around 20 percent of both rural and urban widows answered that treated as moderately. Remaining around 5 percent of rural widows are mentioned that treated as badly, and 20 percent of urban widows also mentioned that treated as badly. It shows that changing the attitude of the people on widows and their children. Comparatively, rural widows are better off than urban widows in the sample.

**Table 17: Distribution of Sample Respondents by an Attitude of Relatives/Neighborhood About You and Your Children**

Attitude of your relatives / neighbourhood about you and your children?	Rural				Urban			
	Good	Moderate	Bad	Total	Good	Moderate	Bad	Total
i) To give respect and recognize you and your children	75	19	6	100	63	21	16	100
ii) To give co-operation and co-ordination with you and your children on village activities	75	19	6	100	62	21	17	100
iii) To treat equally your children on par with others	74	19	7	100	62	21	17	100

**Table 18: Distribution of Sample Respondent by Social Participation**

Social Participation	Rural			Urban		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Member of village panchayat groups	0	100	100	0	100	100
Members of Women SHGs	52	48	100	28	72	100
Members of NGOs/Association	3	97	100	4	96	100
Members of any political party	0	100	100	0	100	100
Others	2	98	100	1	99	100

The table explains that in the sample, widows are not even members of village panchayats, NGOs, welfare associations, and political parties. On the contrary, widows actively participate in Women Self-Help Groups. They are getting a loan from women SHGs to sort out their children's education expenditure and unforeseeable expenditure. The role of women is needed in social participation and decision-making process. In practice, women are denied such kind of activities. Widows are a more vulnerable group in society, then, how can they participate in social activities.

### Summary of the Findings

The main aim of the study is more concentrates on socio-economic conditions of widows and their livelihood in the Puducherry region with a comparison between rural and urban areas. There are differences between rural and urban widows in some aspect, but it is not huge differences at all. It is in the case; rural widows are much better than urban widows in terms of secondary education and above, health conditions, sibling care, and living with husband family in nuclear form, etc. Whereas urban widows are much better than the achievement of primary and middle schooling, taking treatment, living separately in the rental house, getting employment opportunities and more earnings, etc. The study is too hypothetical to analyze the causes for the death of widows husband, most of them are died in drinks, the effect of diseases, and failure of organs related to the addiction in drinking and also died in committing suicide and accidents.

The vulnerable group of widows is getting more support from state public policy, such as for providing monthly widow's pension and free rice of 10 kg per month. Even though widows do not know about other welfare schemes for them. In the aspect

of socio-cultural deprivation, rural widows and their children are more recognized by neighborhood/relatives than urban widows. Widows are restricted to wear customary items and attend functions; urban widows are better than rural widows. On the contrary, urban widows are more sexual harassment than rural widows. There is no social participation of widows in both rural and urban areas except the attainment of widows in the women self-help groups.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that there is no huge difference between rural widows and urban widows are facing socio-economic problems in the Puducherry region. Widows are more economically deprived groups in terms of food expenditure, children's education, and other basic needs. Receiving a monthly widow's pension and free rice of 10 kg is a major determinant factor of the livelihood of widows in the Puducherry. In modern society, widows are not much facing socio-cultural deprivation in terms of social customs, social discrimination, sexual harassment, and social participation in both rural and urban; it might be exceptional in very few aspects. Even though they are not much aware of the various schemes for the welfare of widowhood. There is a huge gap between the implementation of welfare schemes for widows and beneficiaries. The study suggested that to increase the amount of widow's pension and also to provide financial support to their children's education through special scholarships for widow children as per their expectation exposed in the field of study.

### References

Anji, A. and K. Velumani. "Contemporary Social Position of Widowhood among Rural and Urban Area Special Reference to

- Dindigul District.” *International Journal of Advancements in Research and Technology*, vol. 2, no. 10, 2013, pp. 69-92.
- Dreze, Jean, and Marty Chen. “Recent Research on Widows in India-Workshop and Conference Report.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 30, no. 39, 1995.
- Hoonard, D. “Experiences of Living Alone: Widows’ and Widowers’ Perspectives.” *Housing Studies*, vol. 24, no. 6, 2009, pp. 737-753.
- Jamadar, Chandrakant, et al. “Quality of Life among Widows.” *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2015, pp. 56-68.
- Jensen, Robert. “Caste, Culture and the Status and Well-being of Widows in India.” *Analyses in the Economics of Aging*, edited by David A. Wise, University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 357-376.
- Kadoya, Yoshihiko and Ting Yin. *Widow Discrimination and Family Care-Giving in India*, ISER Discussion Paper No. 858, 2012.
- Kaveny, M.C. “The Order of Widows: What the Early Church Can Teach Us about Older Women and Health Care.” *Christian Bioethics*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2005, pp. 11-34.
- Lee, G.R. “Current Research on Widowhood: Devastation and Human Resilience.” *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, vol. 69, no. 1, 2014, pp. 2-3.
- Lysaught, M.T. “Practicing the Order of Widows: A New Call for an Old Vocation.” *Christian Bioethics*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2005, pp. 51-68.
- Mohini Giri, V. *Living Death: Trauma of Widowhood in India*. Gyan Publishing House, 2012.
- Malik, Varun. “Problems of Widows Remarriage in India: A Study.” *Journal of Business and Management & Social Research (JBM & SSR)*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2013, pp. 23-31.
- Nalungwe, Patricia. *Loneliness among Elderly Widows and it’s Effect on their Mental well being: Literature Review*, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, 2009.
- Parvathy, K.A. “Widowhood: Gender Perspective in Problems of Widows in India.” edited by P. Adinarayana Reddy, Sarup & Sons, 2004.
- Pathak, Bindeshwar, and Satyendra Tripathi. *Widows in India: Study of Varanasi and Vrindavan*, Rawat Publications, 2016.
- Pemunta, N.V. and Alubafi, M.F. “The Social Context of Widowhood Rites and Women’s Human Rights in Cameroon.” *Cogent Social Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2016.
- Reddy, P. Adinarayana. *Problems of Widows in India*. Syrup & Sons, 2004.
- Rosenblatt, P.C. and Nkosi, B.C. “South African Zulu Widows in a Time of Poverty and Social Change.” *Death Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2007, pp. 67-85.
- Sharma, Barnali and Usha Rani Boro. “A Comparative Analysis of Widows and Widowers in India.” *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*, vol. 8, no. 7, 2017, pp. 18269-18273.
- Utz, R.L. et al. “The Effect of Widowhood on Older Adults’ Social Participation: An Evaluation of Activity, Disengagement, and Continuity Theories.” *The Gerontologist*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2002, pp. 522-533.
- Wall, Richard. “Bequests to Widows and their Property in Early Modern England.” *The History of the Family*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2010, pp. 222-238.
- Young, Kate. “Widows Without Rights: Challenging Marginalisation and Dispossession.” *Gender & Development*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2006, pp. 199-209.

### Author Details

**Annamalai Jegan**, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Kanchi Mamunivar Government Institute for PG Studies and Research (A), Puducherry, India, **Email ID:** [ajegan.world@gmail.com](mailto:ajegan.world@gmail.com).