

Abstract

Enforced disappearance is an arrest, detention abduction or taking away of a person against his/her will. This is followed by refusal of responsible persons to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the victim. Between 1987 and 1992 Southern Sri Lanka experienced the most intense period of involuntary disappearances and terror.

The general objective of the current study was to assess the psychosocial status of the spouses of enforced disappeared men in the district of Hambantota. In the district of Hambantota 3313 cases had been reported. District of Hambantota has 18 AG divisions and number of disappearances varied among those AG divisions.

According to the AG divisions and proportionate to the number in each district our calculated sample size 422 was selected randomly but respondent rate was 88.6%. A cross sectional descriptive study method was carried out. Interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect the relevant socio demographic data including age, ethnicity, level of education, employment status, information about her husband and children, compensation and rehabilitation data. Validated Sinhala version of the General Health Questionnaire 30 was used to assess the psychological status of these females.

Data was analyzed using SPSS 10 computer software package. The Odds ratio, 95% confidence interval, probability (P) and Z values were used to express the results.

Age group of the participants had ranged from 40-64 years. (current mean age of the participants were 47 and the mean age when the husband disappeared were 27). Most of those widows (34.2%) had been very young (between 25-29 age groups) when they lost their husbands.

Majority of those females had education beyond primary level but below GCE O/L. Only 28.1% of these females had been employed when they entered widowhood. But currently 69.5% are working. Majority of those females (71.4%) gain less than 10000 rupees monthly income. Due to critical socio economic phenomena they still depend on their parents or in laws and constrain to seek their protection by living with them.

Fateful socioeconomic condition of those females were aggravated due to unemployment situation of their children. Current study population 71.7% had applied for compensation but only 14.2% were able to receive. Even from those majority have received less than 50000 rupees.

Most of those females did not know anything about the steps to take to obtain relief. Only 28.9% were aware about commissions and 63% were aware about NGOs. Though the death certificate is mandatory to obtain compensation and for legal remarriage only 60.7% were able to receive it.

The present study revealed the keen and enthusiasm of those suppressed females to find the truth of their lost husbands. All those females have lodged a complaint at some authority. Despite their keen and enthusiasm great majority of those females were not satisfied about the legal procedures (88.2%).

The study was able to elicit a significant association between psychological status and the employment as well as psychological status and satisfaction of the legal procedure. Age of the females, number of living children and level of education had no association to the psychological status. Despite we assumed that receiving compensation would enhance the psychological status of those suppressed females, our statistical analysis revealed there is no significant association between those two variables.

key words: spouses of enforced disappeared men, psychological status