



Indicators and Problems of the Economic and Social Situation of Widows from (2011-2021) A Study in Civil Society of Gulf Province

Hamsa Tahsin Talib Al-Khafaji, Abdali Al-Khafaf

University of Kufa, College of Arts, Department of Civil Society, Najaf, Iraq

(Received: 04 August 2023

Revised: 12 September

Accepted: 06 October)

KEYWORDS

Women's size
widowed women,
inferior view of a
widowed woman,
rape and violence,
Civil society

ABSTRACT:

Due to the importance of the issue of widows in gulf province. This research aims to determine the number of widowed women in one of the gulf provinces and, consequently, understand the magnitude of this issue. It also aims to identify the key indicators and problems related to their economic and social status, the obstacles they face, and the economic indicators that lead to problems, conflicts, and economic suffering, such as economic exploitation and deviation. Additionally, the research aims to uncover the main problems, risks, and social difficulties experienced by widowed women in one of Gulf Province, which persistently accompany them, such as domestic violence and social isolation. The focus is on enhancing and caring for this group by relevant authorities, providing protection, and ensuring their rights.

Introduction

The problem of widowed women represents one of the biggest issues in Gulf province because this group is characterized by a continuous increase in the country. Due to the lack of study on the issue of widowed women, we have decided to study this resilient figure who has struggled and continues to struggle by raising her children and providing them with a decent life. We have indicated that the number of widows is continuously rising, and the reasons for this increase are attributed to the political conflicts, armed conflicts, sectarian violence, local wars, external aggression, epidemics, diseases, and accidents that have claimed the lives of many males, leaving behind wives and children who will suffer greatly from the hardships of life. One of the most prominent challenges they face is the long queue of Gulf Province widows standing daily in front of government offices to obtain financial compensation to support their families after losing their breadwinners. However, most of them encounter the routine procedures of the government, and some are subjected to extortion or harassment in exchange for expediting the processing of their compensation files. This suffering continues to worsen as poverty and destitution increase among widowed women. This is from an economic perspective.

From a social perspective, if the widow is young, her family intervenes and monitors her movements. If she is older, she becomes at the mercy of her children, who may not appreciate the value of the mother who worked tirelessly for them throughout her life. The researcher has delved into the level of widowed women to understand their economic and social suffering, as well as the problem of widowed women for which there is no solution in successive gulf province governments. There are governmental and non-governmental institutions that are concerned with widowed women and provide support, but they are insufficient to meet the needs of all widows.

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the size of the widowed women population, in other words, to assess the magnitude of this issue.
2. To identify the economic aspects and related problems that lead to economic exploitation and deviation.



3. To identify the social problems and risks faced by widowed women, such as domestic violence, social isolation, and other challenges.

In this research, we will focus on the economic and social indicators and problems of widowed women in Gulf Province from 2011 to 2021. Specifically, we will address the following aspects in the following sections:

Section 1:

The size of the widowed women population in the one of the gulf Province 2011 to 2021.

First Requirement: Statistics of Widows in the Departments of City of Gulf of Province.

The number of widows in the city of gulf of Province has been identified through field surveys within the Martyrs Foundation department. In the year 2021, the number of widows in the city of province alone reached 625. (Table 1).

Table (1): Statistics of Martyrs' Spouses in the City of Gulf of Province in the year 2021 AD

No.	The ratio/percentage%	The region/area	Number
1	25.00	The Old City, Al-Jadidat, Khan Al-Makhdara, Police Quarter, Al-Quds Quarter, Al-Ridawiya.	156
2	24.00	Neighborhoods (Al-Jam'iyyah, Al-Aroubah, Al-Wafa', Al-Mukarramah, Al-Askari, Dour Al-Hindiya).	145
3	23.00	Neighborhoods (Al-Rahma, Abu Talib, Al-Nasr, Al-Milad, Al-Shar'a Al-Hawali).	146
4	28.00	Neighborhoods (Al-Salam, Al-Ghari, Al-Nafit, Al-Atibba, Al-Ulama, Al-Shu'ara, Al-Marhalin, Al-Karama, Al-Hussein, Al-Sihha, Al-Ghadir, Al-Furat, Al-Adala, Al-Jami'a).	178
5	100	The total sum/overall total.	625

Second Requirement: Department of Social Protection for Women, gulf province Division - Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs - Social Protection Commission.

The number of widows in the city of Province, according to the comprehensive survey of the social and economic conditions of women in city of Province f, was 2.9% in the year 2021, with a total of 13,570 widows. In the year 2011, the number of widows was 6,762, and it increased to 14,565 in the year 2021. These numbers are remarkably high [1].

Second Branch:

Economic Challenges of Widowed Women

This branch addresses the difficulties and challenges faced by widowed women, primarily economic difficulties.

First Requirement: The Economic Situation of Widowed Women:

Financial hardship often befalls widowed women, especially after the loss of their husbands, as they struggle with the financial burden of supporting their families. This is exacerbated by the limited employment



opportunities for women in our predominantly patriarchal society [2].

The burdens and difficulties on widowed women increase when they are the head of the household and responsible for the expenses, especially when they are widows who have no job or have a limited educational background that could provide them with a source of income. This situation often leads them into poverty, forcing them to work for low wages, which results in the deterioration of the family's financial situation. In some cases, this difficult reality leads to family deviance and disintegration [3].

The feeling of anxiety and fear begins for widowed women when they don't find a support system that can lend them a helping hand or alleviate the troubles of life, especially after the departure of their life companions. They knock on all doors, but find them all closed. So, who will provide for their children? Some widows decide to work or engage in any profession to live decently and strive to integrate themselves into society.

Widowed women want governments to take care of them as a recognition of their struggle and suffering. They don't want to feel restricted in their financial situation or be unable to manage their own funds because the source of these funds is not their own but comes from assistance, whether from the surrounding community, charitable institutions, or civil society organizations. However, these funds are somewhat insufficient to meet the needs of all widows under these institutions. They want to have an economic status that enables them to spend on themselves and their families and fulfill all their needs without sacrificing any of their own needs. They also don't want to receive money as charity from anyone and continue to feel ashamed or contemplate how they reached out to take the money.

The economic reality experienced by widows in city of Province, including those in the city of Gulf Province is extremely poor. This category has suffered greatly, as their income does not match the requirements of caring for their children. Successive governments have neglected them since the establishment of the Gulf Province state until our present day in 2022 due to the absence of social security and the lack of legal protection that leaves them vulnerable to the specter of poverty.

Their efforts and hard work in various fields of life are not sufficient to meet their needs and the needs of their children. The government still lacks a plan that ensures the rights of this category [4].

The economic reality initially relies on family, relatives, and assistance from others because the widow goes through a phase of shock and is unable to go out to work. Later on, she is forced to work regardless of the type of job, even though some widows have higher degrees and good educational qualifications. They are compelled to work in domestic service or in inappropriate places, and the wages in such jobs are usually very low, barely sufficient for daily expenses. These forces widowed women to work extra hours in a day.

The overwhelming void in their family life makes their work a crucial step that requires attention after the shock they experience and when assistance from family and acquaintances comes to an end. Most widows, after the death of their spouses, succeed and prove their competence in their work to fill this void. Widowhood makes them strong individuals and teaches them how to be resilient in a harsh society.

The widowed woman needs her deceased husband, whom she suffered with in all stages of her life, when she goes through different phases of her life, the life of her children, and when she faces financial difficulties or health issues for herself and her children. The responsibility becomes different when he is present compared to when he is gone.

The second issue is the management and distribution of resources in the lives of widows. The relevant authorities should support the cause of widows and provide solutions to their problems. There are proposals to employ these women, provide financial assistance to them, and help them establish small income-generating projects that they need. Afterwards, they should be guided on how to manage their income to cover basic needs such as housing, food, and essential necessities [5].

The majority of widows struggle despite their work or receiving assistance in order to cover all expenses. There are women who spend more than what they receive, and they borrow money from relatives or nearby markets, accumulating debts. Sometimes, even the minor child



goes to work with their mother, earning less than an adult's wage.

Widows' purchases are usually very basic. They rarely buy meat, and the majority of meals consist of inexpensive and light snacks. Widowed women tend to save at the expense of health and education. Most children in a household supported by a widowed mother are uneducated and do not attend school because the mothers cannot afford the expenses associated with schooling, such as clothing, stationery, fees, and transportation. Additionally, widows face psychological problems and a sense of shame when offered help and assistance. They feel pitied and sympathized with, which makes widowed women feel inadequate and humiliated. However, they are forced and compelled to accept it, regardless of the amount of assistance, because it comes with a sense of charity [6].

Widowed women continue to struggle with meeting the requirements of their lives as they advance in age. After raising and exhausting themselves to the point where their children can rely on themselves and forget about their widowed mother, she faces her struggles alone, and no one empathizes with her. Working widowed women have the ability to manage household affairs and are wiser, more open-minded, and more intelligent than non-working widows. Non-working widows tend to be more self-reliant and isolated from the outside world. They may feel inferior, depressed, and neglected, unlike their working counterparts. They may feel that they don't contribute anything to society or their household, unlike working women who have become capable of balancing their home, children, and work. They are organized with their time and financial matters and do not complain about any problems [7].

The planning carried out by widowed women to manage the household's economic resources should ensure that expenses do not exceed income. This is the means to achieve economic balance for the woman, her children, and to improve their standard of living throughout their various life stages. In order for this widow to succeed in her responsibilities, it is important for her family members to also have awareness of planning and the ability to implement budgeting techniques for all available resources. Primarily, this includes financial income to achieve the maximum possible satisfaction of

the family's needs within the limits of the available resources. This income determines the level of the family's consumption and the quality of goods and services, as well as their savings. Managing income helps in its efficient utilization and proper distribution [8].

The third issue: Difficulties faced by the widowed breadwinner:

One of the primary difficulties faced by the widowed breadwinner is the inheritance left by her husband. According to the legal provision, the widow of a martyr who has children is entitled to a pension specified in the Unified Retirement Law No. (9) of the year (2014 AD), which should not be less than half of the minimum limit set in the retirement law. Alternatively, she may inherit from her husband's family. Here, a question arises regarding this matter: Is a widow without children the sole heir to her husband, or do the husband's relatives, such as siblings and parents, share the inheritance with her? The law explicitly states that the inheritance of a martyr belongs solely to his wife and children, excluding the husband's relatives. However, according to law, the husband's relatives from the mother and father's side must share these rights, as they raised and supported the husband throughout his life, living under the same roof and benefiting from his daily earnings (Issue 1344): Relatives in inheritance are divided into three categories, and no relative from a particular category inherits unless there are no relatives from the preceding category. The order of categories is as follows:

Category 1: Parents and children, regardless of their descending order. Both the child and the child's child are from the first category. However, when the child is present, the grandchild and great-grandchild are excluded from the inheritance. This creates difficulties for the widowed woman, leading to conflicts and even legal issues regarding this inheritance [9].

Another difficulty faced by widows is the limited or lack of employment opportunities, which compels them to seek alternative means to secure financial resources to support themselves and their children. One of these means is remarriage, where the dowry paid by the husband helps the widow meet her financial needs. This marriage can be either permanent or temporary, allowing her to manage her affairs and provide for herself and her



children. However, resorting to such measures is often a result of losing everything that would allow her to live a dignified life, forcing her into such a step. Additionally, widows become victims of exploitation and oppression by those around them, including relatives, the local community, and owners of popular markets with whom they interact [10].

And when a widow is financially capable and has a source of income, she becomes vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation to take away her wealth. This exploitation can take the form of a man seeking marriage with her or individuals attempting to deceive her if she owns land, such as land brokers or so-called "contractors" or engineers with whom she collaborated in developing the land. Thus, she becomes susceptible to exploitation and fraud once they discover she is a widow.

Widows sometimes suffer from malnutrition and poverty, and their children become destitute, living on sidewalks and in alleys. They become targets for criminal organizations, leading them astray or falling victim to organ trafficking. Additionally, widows and their children face the risk of becoming involved in criminal activities, where their physical well-being becomes the price, they pay [11].

Civil society organizations define the term "economic violence" as the widow's exploitation by her guardian, who seizes her financial rights because she is underage when married and widowed [12].

Economic violence refers to the guardian's exertion of control over the widow and his dominance over his daughter or sister, should she be widowed, by pressuring her economically. This may include taking her entitlements and financial resources, denying her any means of support, whether household necessities like food or personal needs such as clothing, and if she refuses and her rights are denied by her guardian, she may face physical violence [13].

The poverty and lack of care provided by the state push widows and orphans into negative and socially unacceptable situations, where they are unable to maintain a dignified life after failing to secure employment. Some of these situations include:

1. Begging on the streets, near mosques, shrines, either by the mother herself or her children.
2. Engaging in theft, which categorizes them as criminals and exposes them to organized crime networks.
3. Desperate need drives some women to engage in prostitution to secure financial resources.
4. They become easy targets for organ trafficking gangs.
5. Some fall victim to terrorist groups, who exploit them for various terrorist activities, along with their children of different ages.
6. Widespread kidnappings of children, both boys and girls, by organized crime forces, who deceive them by offering money. These forces smuggle the children and sell them to neighboring countries for various purposes, including criminal activities and others [14].

The Social Reality of Widowed Women

This branch discusses the social reality experienced by widowed women, shedding light on their role within the family and society, as well as the impact of social relationships on them and their social responsibility in raising children.

First demand: Defining the social reality of widows and its challenges:

Social reality is a branch of knowledge that refers to the daily life data, social interactions, societal phenomena, and the individual's relationship with the group in which they live [15].

The causes of poverty and unemployment experienced by widows worldwide are low educational levels, poor health, their inability to negotiate or argue with men, and their ineligibility when the state refuses to grant them credit [16].

Widowed women suffer from a family crisis within their own families because the involuntary absence of the father makes them assume many burdens. They lose security and their role model, and they bear more burdens



and responsibilities than they had before their husband's death [17].

Regardless of the fairness of the social reality towards widowed women, their lives are not free from problems, including the following:

1. Loss of a sense of security, friendship, and love, as the loss of a partner is the most severe shock a widow can experience and one of the toughest tests of life for her.
2. Increased burdens placed on her shoulders in household affairs and raising children. The responsibility is very great in terms of upbringing, monitoring the children, ensuring their educational progress and future, so they do not suffer from being lost in difficult life circumstances.
3. Increased financial problems if she does not work and the father was the sole provider for the family. The economic challenges left behind by the deceased father require the widow to become socially courageous and bold in asserting her children's rights to their father's assets or inheritance from his family if he was unemployed, or their legal rights from the state if he was employed.

Multiple Family Responsibilities of Widowed Women

In addition to household chores, widowed women become both the father and mother in their families. They perform the father's tasks within the home, such as fixing household matters and organizing the house as if the father were present [18].

5. The widowed woman remains confined within the limits and boundaries imposed by her family, society, and suspicious looks regarding her actions, behaviors, and family relationships [19].
6. The customs, traditions, and norms in our Gulf Province society impose restrictions on widows. For example, her husband's family sometimes forces her to marry her husband's brother to preserve the children.. and other restrictions [20].
7. Lack of fulfillment of moral and material needs and loss of tranquility. Suddenly, the institution that used to

support her has vanished, and she is entering a phase of imbalance. Some widows can withstand the challenges and remain steadfast in the face of the overwhelming responsibilities that now surround them. These widows serve as examples and role models when they raise their children to the best of their abilities [21].

Second demand: The impact of social relationships on widowed women.

Widowed women possess the strength to face the hardships of life and the overwhelming circumstances they endure. They face psychological disturbances and start questioning this painful phase in their life journey, recalling the beautiful moments they once shared. When observing and examining the social relationships of widowed women and how they cope with the loss of their spouse, one might perceive an unfairness in their perception. They are expected to control their emotions and maintain composure, as these emotions and reactions are expected to be proportional to the intensity of their situation. For instance, if they appear slightly sad and emotionally vulnerable, they may be perceived as indifferent and unfaithful. If they experience deep sorrow and isolate themselves from the world due to their grief, society may label them as hysterical. The pressure from both psychological distress and societal expectations becomes suffocating, making it challenging for women to confront society. They may develop resentment towards this reality and distance themselves from it, sometimes resorting to self-harm when the pressure from society, environment, and family becomes overwhelming. The study of this group of women has been continuously increasing in Gulf Province society due to the ongoing wars and crises it faces, resulting in a significant number of widows [22].

The stereotypical image of women in general, and widows in particular, has been repeated extensively in Eastern societies as a whole. The community is divided into two groups: the first group supports and cares for widows, extending a helping hand and standing by their side, while the second group rejects and blames them for the husband's death, considering them as the cause of misfortune [23].

The reasons for remarriage for widows are not their own choice, but rather the choice of their family. It becomes



a transaction between the father or brothers of the widow's family and the new husband, with financial benefits and protection for the widow and her reputation being involved [24].

The third issue is the social responsibility in raising children. The love, care, and nurturing they receive in the early stages of life, under the warm relationship that prevailed with the presence of both parents, meeting all their psychological, physical, and health needs, collide with the death of the father. This collision has a negative impact on their mental, physical, social, and psychological development because there is an emotional aspect that is missing, resulting in a void, namely the absence of a father. There is a significant lack of affection and attention, as maternal affection alone becomes insufficient, and a lack of complete sense of security. This leads to behavioral disturbances, resulting in deprivation, failure, and social disengagement, leading to deviation. There are three levels of deprivation: (1) Age: at what age the father was lost, studies have shown that if the loss occurred at an early age, it had a significant impact on the lives of orphans. (2) Duration of deprivation: if it is prolonged and not replaced by another person in the father's role, there is an increase in harm to the child. (3) Degree of deprivation: Is this deprivation for life or for a temporary period, where the mother lives alone or with her own family or the family of her deceased husband [25].

The loss of a father greatly affects both the children and the widowed mother. The educational levels of the children may be affected because the mother, when she loses her husband, no longer has a provider. She may be forced to move in with the husband's family or her own family. This leads to increased chaos in the household, and the children cannot find peace and tranquility. This, in turn, affects their education, academic performance, and future prospects. Another impact on the children is their refusal to obey orders from their grandparents, uncles, or aunts. Some of them may even drop out of school due to the lack of parental supervision and the mother's preoccupation with multiple responsibilities. They may also be influenced by friends who have negative influences, and this can contribute to their decision to leave school. These conflicts lead to problems between the children and the widowed mother. Some of the issues that arise include:

1. Power struggles and control over younger siblings.
2. Conflicts over financial resources taken from the mother, as well as disputes over the deceased father's possessions, such as a car, shop, market, or valuable items.
3. Dependence of older siblings on younger ones and their delegation of tasks to them [26].

In some cases, widows are elderly, and their children are married and have their own families and children. When the widow sees the wives of her sons, her personal strength weakens because the son's wife makes all the decisions in the household. The widowed mother becomes insignificant, and her voice is not heard for fear of the son's wife or the possibility of disagreement with her son, where she might become the cause of conflict. Thus, she is forced to remain silent and continue in this situation until the end of her life [27].

One of the concerns of the widow is to ensure the future of her children and not throw their lives into chaos. However, sometimes due to extreme poverty and destitution experienced by the widow throughout her life stages, she may send her children to the streets to work and earn money. Such cases are quite common, and studies have shown that a significant percentage of street children belong to widowed mothers, accounting for 27.3% of the total number of street children [28, 29].

Results

1. The number of widowed women in the Gulf Province in 2021, according to the comprehensive survey of economic and social conditions of women, was 2.9% with a total of 13,570 widows. Meanwhile, the total number of widows in Gulf Province Governorate reached 14,565, while the number of widowed women in 2011 was 6,762.
2. According to future estimates, the rate of widows increases by 1,000 women annually, regardless of age. There are no accurate figures for widows in the entire Gulf Province of now.



3. Widows in Gulf Province Governorate suffer greatly from poverty and destitution, with a poverty rate of 84.06%.

4. Despite the social problems and challenges surrounding widowed women, they have remained committed to their customs and traditions, rejecting deviation and harm to Gulf of Province in particular.

5. Widowed women in the Gulf of Province lack government attention and healthcare. There are widows who lack basic necessities of life, and no one knows about their conditions.

6. The study showed that widowed women who experience violence in all its forms, whether physical, psychological, verbal, or economic, have a lower percentage compared to widowed women who do not experience violence in the Gulf of Province.

7. There are multiple reasons for widowhood among women in the Gulf of Province, with the highest percentage attributed to diseases and the lowest to accidents, while martyrdom falls within the average range.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the widowed population in Iraq, specifically in the city of Najaf, is significant and continues to grow. The number of widowed women has increased over the years, indicating a need for focused attention and support for this vulnerable group. Widowed women in Najaf face numerous challenges, including economic hardship and a high poverty rate. This highlights the importance of implementing social welfare programs and economic initiatives to improve their living conditions. Despite the difficulties they face, widowed women in Najaf remain committed to their customs and traditions, contributing to the preservation of the local society's values. However, government attention and healthcare services for widowed women are lacking, leaving many without access to basic necessities and healthcare. It is crucial to address this issue and ensure that widowed women receive the support they need. Violence against widowed women is a concerning issue, although the percentage of widows experiencing violence appears to be lower compared to

those who do not. Nevertheless, efforts should be made to prevent and address any form of violence against widowed women to ensure their safety and well-being. The reasons for widowhood in Najaf vary, with diseases being the most common cause. This underscores the importance of healthcare services and preventive measures to reduce the prevalence of diseases that lead to widowhood. Overall, a comprehensive analysis of the original sources is necessary to fully understand the nuances and complexities of the widowed women's situation in Najaf and Iraq as a whole.

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