



**A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC,
AND LEGAL PROBLEMS OF HINDU WOMEN WITH PENDING DIVORCE
CASES: A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NASHIK DISTRICT**

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Abstract: Marriage is regarded as one of the most significant social institutions in Indian society, providing emotional, social, economic, and cultural stability to individuals and families. However, the increasing incidence of marital conflicts and divorce has emerged as a major social concern. Women involved in prolonged divorce proceedings often experience multidimensional challenges that affect their social status, psychological well-being, economic security, and access to justice. Against this background, the present study examines the social, psychological, economic, and legal problems faced by Hindu women whose divorce cases are pending, with special reference to Nashik District, Maharashtra.

The primary objective of the study is to analyze the legal difficulties encountered by women during divorce proceedings and to examine their present social, psychological, economic, and legal conditions. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted. Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule from Hindu women with pending divorce cases in Nashik District, while secondary data were obtained from books, research articles, government reports, legal documents, journals, and official publications. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency and percentage distribution.

The findings reveal that the most significant legal challenge faced by respondents is the lack of awareness regarding judicial procedures and legal rights. Many women also experience inadequate access to legal aid services, insufficient knowledge of court decisions, and limited awareness of beneficial legal provisions. Economic difficulties primarily arise due to a lack of information about government welfare schemes, financial constraints, and limited knowledge regarding litigation expenses and available financial assistance. The study further indicates that prolonged court proceedings constitute the most serious legal obstacle, resulting in increased financial burdens, uncertainty, and emotional distress. With regard to their present condition, psychological stress and emotional imbalance emerged as the most prevalent problems, followed by lack of social acceptance, educational limitations, and economic insecurity. Social stigma, family conflicts, uncertainty about the future, and prolonged litigation adversely affect the respondents' quality of life and overall well-being. The study concludes that legal illiteracy, inadequate institutional support, delayed judicial processes, and socio-economic vulnerabilities collectively intensify the hardships experienced by women during divorce proceedings.

The study recommends strengthening legal awareness programmes, expanding free legal aid and counselling services, improving access to government welfare schemes, promoting financial literacy, ensuring speedy disposal of family court cases, and establishing effective psychosocial support

mechanisms. These measures would contribute to protecting women's legal rights, improving their mental health, enhancing social reintegration, and promoting their overall empowerment. The findings of the study provide valuable insights for policymakers, legal practitioners, social workers, researchers, and organizations working in the fields of women's welfare, family studies, and gender justice.

The findings revealed that 62% of respondents did not own smartphones, while 57% possessed low digital literacy. Major barriers included difficulties in operating smartphones, OTP verification, poor internet connectivity, language limitations, and dependence on family members or intermediaries. Statistical analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy, and higher digital literacy was associated with improved access to welfare schemes. The study concludes that digital exclusion has emerged as a critical social problem among the rural elderly in Jalgaon District. Strengthening digital literacy programme improving rural digital infrastructure, and establishing community-based digital assistance centers can enhance social inclusion and ensure equitable access to government welfare services.

Keywords: Divorce, Pending Divorce Cases, Hindu Women, Legal Problems, Psychological Problems, Economic Problems, Social Problems, Family Court, Women's Empowerment, Legal Awareness, Nashik District, Sociology of Family, Gender Justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is universally recognized as one of the oldest and most significant social institutions, serving as the foundation of family life and social organization. In Indian society, marriage is not merely a legal contract but also a sacred social, cultural, and religious institution that establishes mutual rights and responsibilities between spouses. It promotes social stability, emotional security, economic cooperation, and the continuity of family lineage. Among Hindus, marriage has traditionally been regarded as a sacrament (sanskara), emphasizing lifelong commitment, family values, and social obligations. However, rapid social transformation, urbanization, industrialization, women's education, economic independence, changing gender roles, and increasing awareness of individual rights have significantly altered the traditional perception of marriage. Consequently, marital conflicts and divorce have become increasingly common in contemporary Indian society.

Although divorce is legally recognized as a legitimate means of dissolving an unsuccessful marriage, the process itself is often prolonged, emotionally exhausting, financially burdensome, and socially challenging, particularly for women. Divorce proceedings involve not only legal formalities but also psychological stress, social stigma, economic insecurity, and uncertainty regarding future life. Women with pending divorce cases frequently encounter multiple obstacles, including delayed judicial procedures, inadequate legal awareness, financial dependence, limited access to legal aid, child custody disputes, and insufficient knowledge of government welfare schemes. These challenges adversely affect their physical health, mental well-being, social relationships, and economic stability.

The institution of marriage in India has undergone substantial transformation due to modernization, globalization, urban migration, increased educational opportunities, and greater participation of women in the workforce. While these developments have strengthened women's autonomy and awareness of legal rights, they have also increased expectations regarding equality, mutual respect, and individual freedom within marriage. When these

expectations remain unfulfilled because of domestic violence, incompatibility, cruelty, dowry harassment, desertion, alcoholism, extramarital relationships, or other marital disputes, divorce often becomes the only viable legal remedy. Nevertheless, the legal process itself may become another source of hardship, especially when cases remain pending for extended periods.

The legal framework governing divorce among Hindus in India is primarily provided by the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, which recognizes various grounds for divorce, including cruelty, adultery, desertion, conversion, mental disorder, and mutual consent. Additional legal protections are available through the Family Courts Act, 1984, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and other relevant legislation. Despite these legal safeguards, many women continue to face procedural delays, inadequate legal representation, lack of awareness regarding their rights, and limited access to affordable legal services. Consequently, the effective implementation of these laws remains a significant concern.

Pending divorce proceedings create long-term uncertainty in women's lives. During this period, many women experience social isolation, discrimination, reduced family support, emotional instability, anxiety, depression, and financial hardship. Employment opportunities may be limited due to educational constraints, family responsibilities, or psychological distress. Women who have dependent children face additional challenges related to child custody, maintenance, education, and emotional care. Prolonged litigation also increases legal expenses and often discourages women from pursuing their legitimate legal rights. From a sociological perspective, divorce is not merely an individual or family issue but also a reflection of broader social, cultural, economic, and institutional processes. The experiences of women during divorce proceedings are influenced by gender norms, patriarchal values, family structures, social attitudes, economic resources, educational background, and the efficiency of legal institutions. Therefore, studying the social, psychological, economic, and legal problems of women with pending divorce cases contributes to a deeper understanding of gender inequality, access to justice, women's empowerment, and social change in contemporary India.

Nashik District, one of the rapidly developing districts of Maharashtra, presents a suitable setting for examining these issues. Urbanization, industrial growth, educational expansion, and changing family structures have influenced marital relationships and family dynamics in the district. At the same time, traditional cultural values continue to shape societal attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Women involved in pending divorce cases in Nashik often experience the intersection of traditional expectations and modern legal realities, making their experiences particularly significant for sociological inquiry. The present study, titled "A Sociological Study of the Social, Psychological, Economic, and Legal Problems of Hindu Women with Pending Divorce Cases: A Special Reference to Nashik District," seeks to examine the multidimensional challenges faced by these women. The study investigates legal difficulties encountered during divorce proceedings, their current social, psychological, and economic conditions, the level of legal awareness among respondents, access to government welfare schemes and legal services, and the overall impact of prolonged litigation on their quality of life. Furthermore, the study aims to generate evidence-based recommendations for improving legal support systems,

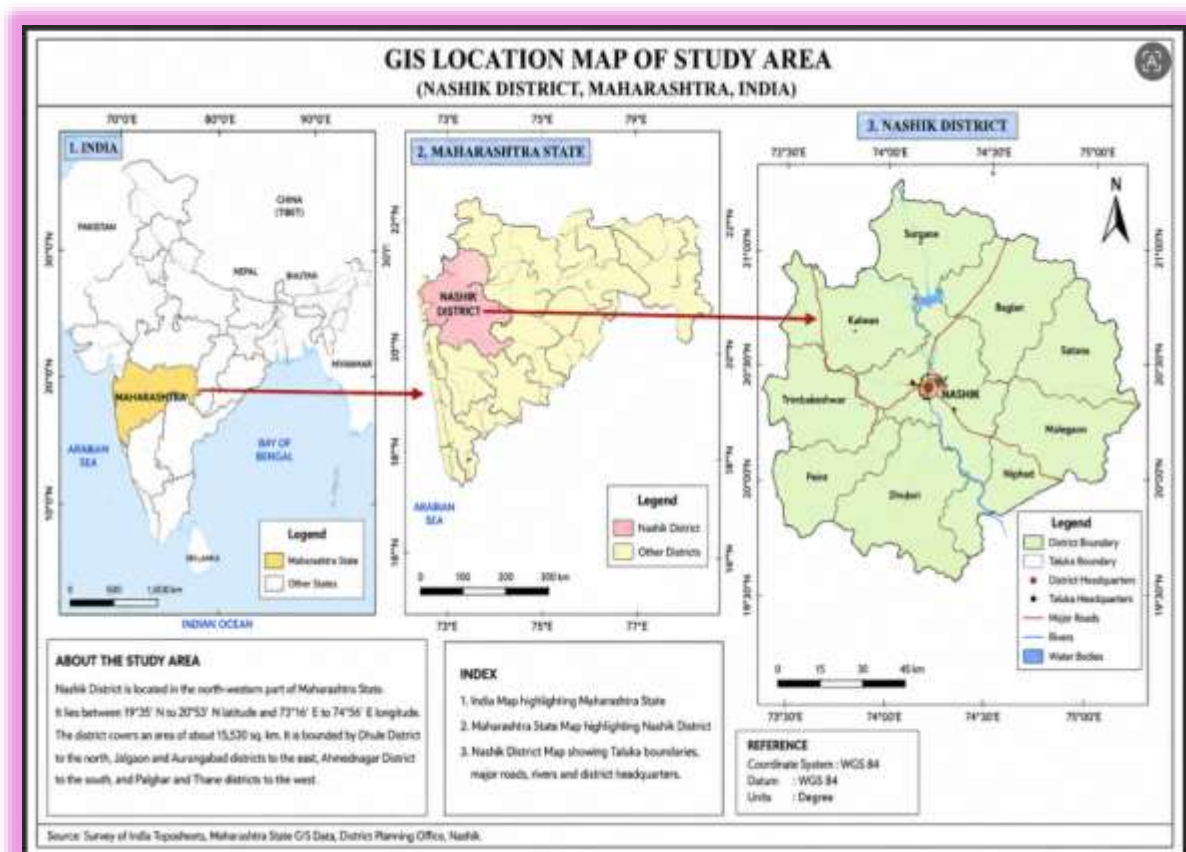
counselling services, financial assistance, policy implementation, and institutional mechanisms that promote women's welfare and access to justice.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the fields of sociology, gender studies, family studies, social work, and legal studies. The study will also provide valuable insights for policymakers, judicial authorities, legal practitioners, family counsellors, social workers, women's organizations, and researchers working toward strengthening gender justice, women's empowerment, and effective family welfare policies in India.

2. Research Method

The present study adopted a descriptive and analytical research method to examine the social, psychological, economic, and legal problems of Hindu women with pending divorce cases in Nashik District.

The study is empirical in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from Hindu women with pending divorce cases through a structured interview schedule and personal interviews. Secondary data were obtained from books, research journals, theses, government reports, census publications, legal documents, court records (where available), official publications, and relevant Acts.



The study was conducted in Nashik District, Maharashtra. Respondents were selected using the purposive sampling method, as only Hindu women with pending divorce cases fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the research. The collected data were classified, coded, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distribution, percentage

analysis, and tabulation. The findings were interpreted from a sociological perspective to understand the multidimensional problems faced by the respondents and to formulate appropriate recommendations for improving their legal, social, psychological, and economic well-being.

3. Results and Discussion

The present study investigated the legal, social, psychological, and economic problems experienced by Hindu women with pending divorce cases in Nashik District. The findings indicate that divorce litigation extends beyond a legal process and significantly influences women's overall quality of life. The results demonstrate that inadequate legal awareness, prolonged judicial procedures, financial insecurity, and social stigma collectively contribute to the vulnerability of women during pending divorce proceedings.

3.1 Legal Problems Experienced During Divorce Proceedings

The findings reveal that 41% of the respondents lacked adequate knowledge of judicial procedures and legal rights, making it the most frequently reported legal problem. Many respondents were unaware of procedural requirements, maintenance provisions, child custody regulations, and legal remedies available under family law. This lack of legal literacy reduced their ability to make informed decisions and effectively pursue justice.

Furthermore, 23% of the respondents reported inadequate knowledge of court judgments and legal decisions, while 21% experienced limited access to legal aid services. An additional 15% lacked awareness regarding beneficial legal settlements related to maintenance, property rights, and child custody.

These findings suggest that the existence of legal provisions alone is insufficient unless women possess adequate awareness of their legal rights. Similar observations have been reported by Amato (2000), who argued that prolonged divorce proceedings often increase emotional and legal uncertainty. Likewise, Kabeer (1999) emphasized that access to information is a fundamental component of women's empowerment and decision-making capacity.

Table 1. Major Legal, Economic, Social, and Psychological Problems Faced by Hindu Women with Pending Divorce Cases.

Dimension	Variable	Percentage (%)	Rank
Legal	Lack of awareness of judicial procedures and legal rights	41.00	1
Legal	Lack of knowledge of court judgments	23.00	2
Legal	Limited access to legal aid services	21.00	3
Legal	Lack of awareness of beneficial legal settlements	15.00	4
Economic	Unable to access government financial assistance	55.33	1
Economic	Financial constraints	31.33	2
Economic	Lack of knowledge about court fees	7.00	3
Economic	Lack of awareness of tax benefits	6.33	4

Social & Psychological	Psychological stress and emotional imbalance	52.33	1
Social & Psychological	Lack of social acceptance	25.33	2
Social & Psychological	Educational limitations	14.67	3
Social & Psychological	Economic insecurity	7.67	4
Legal Challenges	Lengthy judicial proceedings	52.67	1
Legal Challenges	Difficulty obtaining legal representation	18.33	2
Legal Challenges	Child custody disputes	14.67	3
Legal Challenges	Limited government legal support	14.33	4

3.2 Economic Problems Arising from Inadequate Legal Awareness

Economic insecurity emerged as another important dimension of women's vulnerability during divorce proceedings. The majority of respondents (55.33%) reported that they were unable to receive government financial assistance because they lacked information regarding welfare schemes and legal entitlements.

In addition, 31.33% experienced financial constraints due to litigation costs, household expenditure, and children's educational responsibilities. A smaller proportion reported inadequate knowledge regarding court fees (7%) and tax-related financial benefits (6.33%).

These findings indicate that inadequate legal awareness directly contributes to financial exclusion. Women who are unaware of welfare programmes remain unable to access available institutional support, thereby increasing their dependence on family members or informal support networks. This observation supports the argument that legal empowerment and economic empowerment are mutually reinforcing processes.

Major Problems Faced by Hindu Women with Pending Divorce Cases

Comparison of the highest reported problems across the four major dimensions of the study.

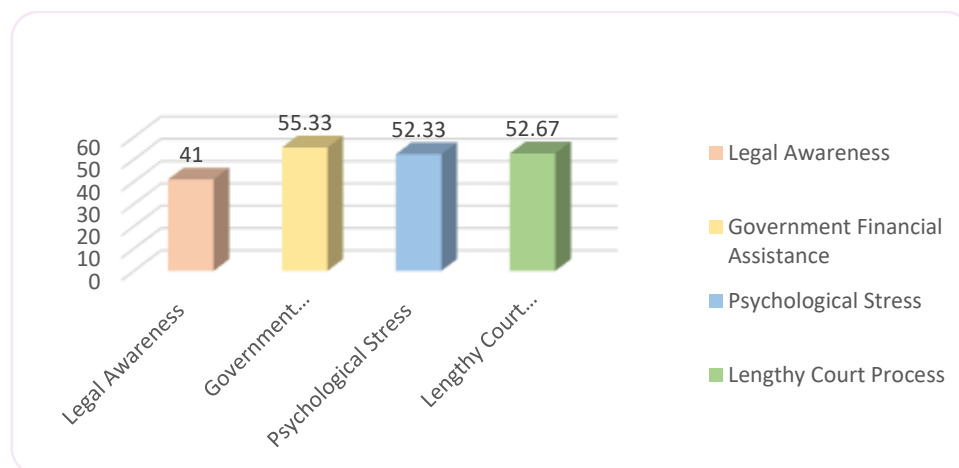


Figure 1. Conceptual Representation of the Problems Experienced During Pending Divorce Proceedings.

3.3 Present Social, Psychological, and Economic Condition

Psychological stress emerged as the most severe consequence of pending divorce proceedings. More than half of the respondents (52.33%) reported experiencing anxiety, emotional instability, depression, uncertainty, and reduced self-confidence. Continuous litigation, family disputes, financial insecurity, and fear regarding future life contributed significantly to psychological distress.

The study further revealed that 25.33% of respondents experienced social discrimination and lack of social acceptance because of their marital status. Traditional perceptions regarding divorced women continue to influence social relationships and often lead to isolation, stigma, and reduced participation in community life.

Educational limitations were reported by 14.67% of respondents, restricting employment opportunities and reducing financial independence. Although only 7.67% identified economic instability as their primary concern, financial insecurity remained an underlying factor influencing psychological well-being and social adjustment.

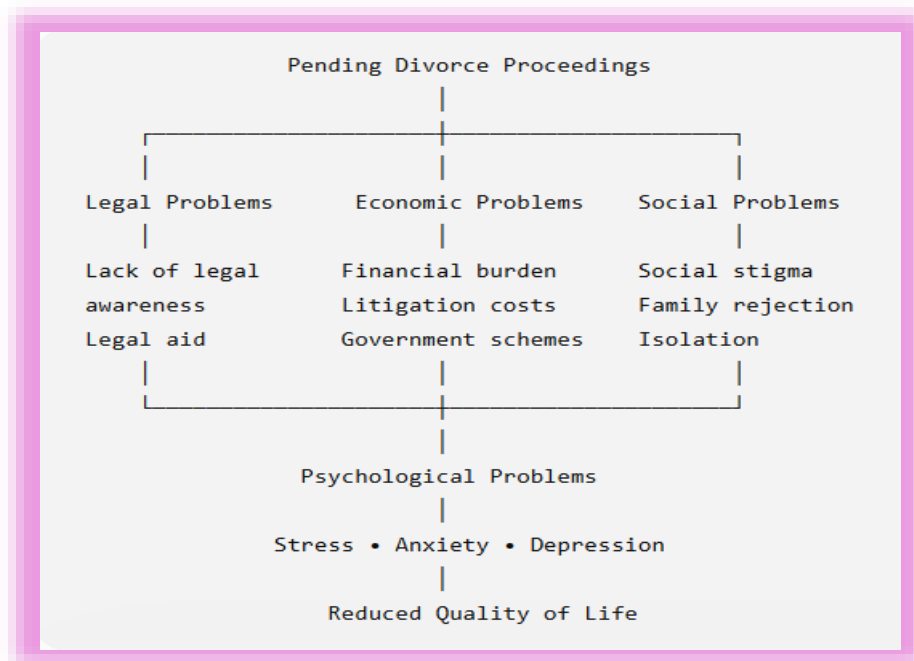
The findings indicate that divorce litigation affects women far beyond the courtroom. Psychological distress, social exclusion, and economic vulnerability reinforce one another, creating long-term challenges that hinder rehabilitation and empowerment.

3.4 Legal Challenges in Pending Divorce Cases

The study found that 52.67% of respondents identified prolonged judicial proceedings as the most serious legal challenge. Delays in family court proceedings increased legal expenses, prolonged uncertainty regarding maintenance and child custody, and intensified emotional stress.

Approximately 18.33% reported difficulty obtaining competent legal representation because of financial limitations and inadequate legal guidance. Child custody disputes (14.67%) further complicated litigation by increasing emotional pressure on mothers. Limited awareness regarding government legal assistance (14.33%) also prevented many women from utilizing available institutional support.

These findings indicate that procedural delays undermine women's confidence in the justice delivery system and significantly affect their social and psychological well-being. Strengthening legal aid services, improving court efficiency, and promoting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms may help reduce these challenges.



Discussion

The present findings demonstrate that the legal, psychological, economic, and social problems experienced by women with pending divorce cases are highly interconnected. Legal illiteracy reduces access to institutional support, while prolonged litigation contributes to financial hardship and emotional distress. Social stigma further limits women's ability to rebuild independent and socially accepted lives.

From a sociological perspective, the findings reflect the continuing influence of patriarchal social structures within the Indian family system. Although legislative reforms have strengthened women's legal rights, effective access to justice remains constrained by inadequate legal awareness, institutional barriers, and socio-cultural norms. Consequently, legal equality has not always translated into substantive social equality.

The findings also support the concept of intersectionality, which suggests that gender-based disadvantages interact with economic dependency, educational limitations, and institutional barriers to produce multiple forms of social exclusion. Women with limited education and financial resources are particularly vulnerable during prolonged divorce litigation because they possess fewer social and economic resources to negotiate legal processes effectively.

Overall, the study highlights the urgent need for integrated interventions that combine legal awareness, psychological counselling, financial assistance, legal aid, and community-based support services. Strengthening institutional mechanisms and improving coordination among family courts, legal aid authorities, women's welfare departments, and civil society organizations would substantially improve women's access to justice and promote their social and economic empowerment.

The findings contribute to the sociological understanding of divorce as a multidimensional social process rather than merely a legal event. They also provide empirical evidence for

policymakers, judicial administrators, legal practitioners, and social workers to design gender-sensitive interventions aimed at reducing the adverse consequences of prolonged divorce proceedings.

4. Conclusion

The present study examined the social, psychological, economic, and legal problems experienced by Hindu women with pending divorce cases in Nashik District. The findings demonstrate that pending divorce is not merely a legal process but a multidimensional social issue that profoundly affects women's overall well-being and quality of life.

The study revealed that inadequate legal awareness is one of the major barriers faced by women during divorce proceedings. A significant proportion of respondents lacked knowledge of judicial procedures, legal rights, court judgments, and available legal aid services, thereby limiting their ability to access justice effectively. In addition, insufficient awareness of government welfare schemes and financial assistance programmes contributed to economic insecurity and increased dependence on family members or other informal support systems.

Psychological stress emerged as the most serious consequence of prolonged divorce proceedings. The uncertainty associated with lengthy litigation, financial instability, family conflicts, and concerns regarding child custody resulted in anxiety, emotional imbalance, and reduced self-confidence among many respondents. Social stigma and lack of acceptance further intensified these psychological challenges by restricting women's social participation and support networks.

The study also identified prolonged judicial proceedings as a major legal challenge. Delays in the disposal of divorce cases not only increased litigation costs but also prolonged emotional distress and uncertainty regarding maintenance, child custody, and future security. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of legal protection depends not only on the existence of laws but also on timely judicial processes, accessible legal services, and effective implementation of welfare measures.

Overall, the study concludes that the legal, economic, psychological, and social problems experienced by Hindu women with pending divorce cases are closely interconnected. Addressing these challenges requires a multidisciplinary and coordinated approach involving the judiciary, legal aid institutions, government departments, social workers, mental health professionals, and civil society organizations. Strengthening legal literacy programmes, expanding free legal aid and counselling services, improving awareness of government welfare schemes, promoting economic empowerment through skill development and employment opportunities, and ensuring the speedy disposal of family court cases are essential for enhancing women's access to justice and improving their quality of life.

The findings contribute to the existing literature on family sociology, gender studies, and women's rights by providing empirical evidence on the lived experiences of women undergoing prolonged divorce litigation. The study also offers practical implications for policymakers and judicial authorities in designing gender-sensitive legal and social welfare interventions. Future research may extend this investigation to other regions of India and adopt longitudinal or

comparative approaches to better understand the long-term social, psychological, and economic consequences of pending divorce proceedings among women.

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