



A Study on the Status of the Rural Elderly in their Families in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human beings, and thus the end of the human life cycle. Euphemisms and terms for old people include, old people (worldwide usage), seniors (American usage), senior citizens (British and American usage), older adults (in the social sciences), the elderly, and elders (in many cultures including the cultures of aboriginal people).

India is the second high population country in the world and the elderly population increasing rapidly with various reasons. Today India is home to one out of every ten senior citizens of the world. Both the absolute and relative size of the population of the elderly in India will gain in strength in future. Among the total elderly population, those who live in rural areas constitute 78 percent.

Many past studies reviled that as the rural elderly and specifically elderly living in joint family system are enjoying very good status. But recent issues highlighted that the rural elderly also facing many problems and negligence as well as violence. The status of elderly depends up on various factors related to the family members, living environment, relationship with family members and surrounding people etc., Present study is an attempt to understand the rural elderly status in their families in Andhra Pradesh.

KEYWORDS: STATUS, ELDERLY, RURAL, FAMILIES, ANDHRA PRADESH, INTER-RELATIONSHIP

INTRODUCTION

WHO said nearly 142 million people in the South-East Asia Region are above the age of 60 years. The number of aged people will double by 2020, and triple by 2050 compared to 2000. The average life expectancy in most countries in the region will be above 75 years by 2050. Overall, nearly 7.5% of India's population is aged 60 years and above. In rural India, 7.5% people are aged 60+, while in urban India the corresponding figure is 7%. According to the 2006 World Population Prospects, India's 80+ will increase more than six times from existing 78 lakh to about 5.14 crore by 2050. Now, 20% of this category in India suffers from Alzheimer's disease. The 65+ population is expected to quadruple from 6.4 crore in 2005 to 23.9 crore, while those aged 60 and above will increase from 8.4 crore to 33.5 crore over the next 43 years.

ELDERLY AT NATIONAL

In India with majority of its population were aged less than 30, and the problems and issues of its grey population has not been given serious consideration and only a few studies on them have been attempted in our country. To reap the advantage of demographic dividend, the focus is mainly on the children and the youth and fulfillment of their basic needs for proper development. Also the traditional Indian society and the age-old joint family system have been instrumental in changes in the social scenario and the emerging prevalence of nuclear family setups in India in recent years the elderly people are likely to be exposed to emotional, physical and financial safeguarding the social and economic security of the elderly people in the country.

This has drawn the attention of the policy makers and administrators at central and state governments, voluntary organizations and civil society. In view of the increasing need for intervention in area of old age welfare, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India adopted 'National Policy on Older persons' in January, 1999. The policy provides broad guidelines to State Governments for taking action for welfare of older persons in a proactive manner by devising their own policies and plans of action. The policy defines 'senior citizen' as a person who is 60 years old or above. It strives to ensure wellbeing of senior citizens and improve quality of their lives through providing specific facilities, concessions, relief, services etc. and helping them cope with problems associated with old age. It also proposes affirmative action on the part of Government Departments for ensuring that the existing public services for senior citizens are user friendly and sensitive to their needs. It provides a comprehensive picture of various facilities and covers many areas like financial security, health care, shelter education, welfare, protection of life and property etc.

India has a population of approx. 60 million older women (60+). Traditionally, in India women have had a respectable place among almost all communities, but contemporary ground realities vary from this fact. In

many Indian communities women are treated as second class citizens. They have been lagging behind in almost all walks of life for centuries. They have never been financially independent. Due to less social interaction they even don't know about their rights and powers. Older women lead a marginalized life and many of them live a neglected and miserable life. Even human rights of older women are at stake today.

In India the size of the elderly population, i.e. persons above the age of 60 years is fast growing although it constituted only 7.4 % of total population at the turn of the new millennium. For a developing country like India, this may pose mounting pressures on various socio economic fronts including pension outlays, health care expenditures, fiscal discipline, savings levels etc. Again this segment of population faces multiple medical and psychological problems. There is an emerging need to pay greater attention to ageing -related issues and to promote holistic policies and programmes for dealing with the ageing society. Elderly or old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human beings. The boundary of old age cannot be defined exactly because it does not have the same meaning in all societies. Government of India adopted 'National Policy on Older Persons' in January 1999. The policy defines 'senior citizen' or 'elderly' as a person who is of age 60 years or above.

The status of rural elderly changing with various factors due to various factors like high rural to urban migration, declining of joint family systems, decreased human values and moral values etc, and elderly facing number problems in their last stages of life. Present study is an attempt to understand the rural elderly status in their families.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the status of the rural elderly in their families.
2. To study factors influencing the status of the rural elderly in their families
3. To understand present status of elderly effects on their family conditions

STATUS OF ELDERLY:

The status of elderly at Home depends upon how much power they enjoy on Family members how for family members give respect to their views, and orders of elderly.

The status of elderly at Home depends upon different factors on which how far their children and other family members give respect and follow the suggestion of elderly. In order to correctly assess the status of elderly, it is appropriate to conduct an index based on the related aspects. The index on the status of elderly at home was developed based on the factors Viz :-

1. Enjoyment of parents on other family members.
2. Involvement in domestic affairs.
3. Purchasing household items in consultation with respondent.
4. Family members seeking advice on day to day activities.
5. Female members seek permission to go out.
6. Controlling of other family members over elderly during sickness.
7. Consulting children marriage decisions.
8. Kindness and affection of other family members over elderly during sickness.
9. Spending of money during, sickness of elderly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Status of elderly at family level:

The index of the status of elderly has been presented in the Table -1

**Table-1
Status of elderly**

| S. No | Description | Low | Medium | High | Total |
|-------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | Enjoyment of power on other family members | 29.91 (32) | 34.67 (104) | 34.67 (104) | 100.00 (300) |
| 2 | Involvement in domestic affairs | 26.67 (80) | 39.00 (117) | 34.33 (103) | 100.00 (300) |
| 3 | Purchasing household items in consultation with respondent | 30.33 (91) | 35.33 (106) | 34.33 (103) | 100.00 (300) |
| 4 | Family members seek advice on day to day activities | 29.33 (88) | 37.33 (112) | 33.33 (100) | 100.00 (300) |
| 5 | Female members seek permission to go out | 29.00 (87) | 39.00 (117) | 32.00 (96) | 100.00 (300) |
| 6 | Controlling Financial affairs | 27.33 (82) | 34.00 (102) | 38.67 (116) | 100.00 (300) |
| 7 | Consulting children marriage decisions | 30.33 (91) | 36.00 (108) | 33.67 (101) | 100.00 (300) |
| 8 | Kindness and affection during sickness | 32.67 (98) | 33.00 (99) | 34.33 (103) | 100.00 (300) |
| 9 | Spending money during sickness | 37.60 (113) | 28.30 (108) | 34.10 (102) | 100.00 (300) |

The table presents that 104 respondents (34.67 %) enjoy high power and 92 respondents enjoy poor power in the family. In case of managing domestic affairs, 117 respondents (39 %) opined that daughter-in-law manages domestic affairs, 103 respondents (34.33 %) manage themselves and 80 respondents (26.67 %) never manage domestic affairs in the family. Similarly, 106 respondents (35.33%) opined that they are consulted rarely while purchasing household items, 103 respondents (34.33 %) always and 91 respondents (30.33%) were never consulted. In case of seeking advice, 112 respondents (37.33 %) opined that the family members seek advice rarely, 100 respondents (33.33 %) opined always and 88 respondents (29.33 %) opined rarely. Regarding permission by the female members to go out 116 respondents (38.67 %) opined that rarely female members seek permission, 96 respondents (32 %) opined always and 87 respondents (29 %) opined never. In case of controlling financial affairs in family, 116 respondents (38.67 %) opined that they control financial affairs always, 102 respondents (38.67 %) opined rarely and 116 respondents (38.67 %) opined never. Regarding consultation children's marriage, 101 respondents (33.67 %) opined that they were consulted always, 108 respondents (38.67 %) opined rarely and 91 respondents (30.33 %) opined never. In case of kindness during sickness, 103 respondents (34.33 %) opined that they received much kindness, 99 respondents (33 %) opined somewhat and 98 respondents (32.67 %) opined that they are given least importance in the family. Regarding spending of money during sickness, 34.10% were opined good, 28.00% opined average and 37.00% were not happy.

2. Index of status of elderly:

The index on status of elderly was analyzed based on factors as dis-

ussed above. The total score ranges between 9 to 27.

The respondents who obtained the score between 9 to 15 are treated as having low status and those with score range of 16 to 22 are treated as having moderate status and the remaining with the score of above 23 are treated as having high status at family level.

The following table denotes the level of status of elderly at family level according to the index developed.

Table - 2 (Index table)

| Item No | Description | Low | Medium | High | Total |
|---------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| Total | | 29.67 (89) | 48.00 (144) | 22.33 (67) | 100.00 (300) |

The overall index on status of elderly at Family level show that majority of the respondents are having medium level of status (48%) and 29% have low status and only 22.3% established high status in controlling domestic affairs.

3. Status of age vs status of elderly

Inter-relation between select socio-economic characteristics and status of elderly

A modest attempt was made to understand relationship and to find out the socio-economic determinants of status of elderly at family level. The status of elderly has been discussed basing on age, caste, marital status, educational status, no of living rooms and inter-relationship among family members.

Age & status of elderly

The age of the respondents and its influence on status of elderly Table -3

**Table-3
Age Vs Status of Elderly**

| S.No | Age | LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH | Total |
|-------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | 60- 65 Years | 23.87 (37) | 50.32 (78) | 25.81 (40) | 51.67 (155) |
| 2 | 66-70 Years | 33.77 (26) | 45.45 (35) | 20.78 (16) | 25.67 (77) |
| 3 | Above 71+ Years | 38.24 (26) | 45.59 (31) | 16.18 (11) | 22.67 (68) |
| TOTAL | | 29.67 (89) | 48.00% (144) | 22.33% (67) | 100.00 (300) |

Chi-Square = 6.309(Not Significant level)df = 4

From the Table -3, a clear inverse relationship was noticed between present age of elderly and their status at family level.

More than fifty percent (50.32%) of the respondents aged between 60 to 65 years established high status of family level followed by 20.7% of those aged between 66 to 70 years and only 16% of those aged above 71 years. Similar in the case with regard those having medium status also. Thus, present age of elderly is a crucial determinant of status of elderly at family level.

4. Caste & Status of elderly:

The caste of respondents and its influence on status of elderly has been elicited and presented in the Table .4

**Table-4
Caste Vs Status of Elderly**

| S. No | Caste | LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH | Total |
|-------|-------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 1 | OC | 27.03 (10) | 45.95 (17) | 27.03 (10) | 12.33 (37) |
| 2 | BC | 27.10 (42) | 49.03 (76) | 23.87 (37) | 51.67 (155) |
| 3 | SC | 31.34 (21) | 47.76 (32) | 20.90 (14) | 22.33 (67) |
| 4 | ST | 39.02 (16) | 46.34 (19) | 14.63 (6) | 13.67 (41) |
| TOTAL | | 29.67 (89) | 58.00 (144) | 12.33 (67) | 100.00 (300) |

Chi-Square = 3.476(Not Significant level)df = 6

The above table portrays that the status of caste of respondents is directly associated with the status of elderly at family level

More percentage of respondents among O.Cs (27.4%) had high status, followed by 23.8% of B.Cs and 20.9% of S.Cs and only 14.6% of S.Ts. Hence, it can be assumed that caste status of the respondents will determine the level of status of elderly at Family level.

5 Marital Status & Elderly status

The marital status of respondents and its influence on status of elderly has been elicited and presented in the Table -5

**Table-5
Marital Status Vs Status of Elderly**

| S. No | Marital status | LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH | Total |
|-------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Currently married | 25.00 (35) | 49.29 (69) | 25.71 (36) | 46.67 (140) |
| 2 | Unmarried | 0.00 (0) | 100.00 (1) | 0.00 (0) | 0.33 (1) |
| 3 | Widow | 33.96 (54) | 46.54 (74) | 19.50 (31) | 53.00 (159) |
| 4 | Divorcee | 0.00 (0) | 0.00 (0) | 0.00 (0) | 0.00 (0) |
| TOTAL | | 29.67 (89) | 58.00 (144) | 12.33 (67) | 100.00 (300) |

Chi-Square = 4.508(Not Significant level)df = 3

The marital status of elderly established considerable influence on status & elderly at Home. More percentage of currently married respondents (25.7%) is having high status as against only 19.5% of the widows. Thus, an elder female has good status at family when they are living with their husbands compared to widows.

6 Education and status of Elderly

Educational Status of the respondents its influence on status of elderly has been elicited and presented in the Table - 6.

**Table-6
Education Vs Status of Elderly**

| S. No | Education | LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH | Total |
|-------|------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Illiterate | 31.76 (81) | 48.63 (124) | 19.61 (50) | 85.00 (255) |
| 2 | Up to 10 th | 17.95 (7) | 46.15 (18) | 35.90 (14) | 13.00 (39) |
| 3 | Above 10 th class | 16.67 (1) | 33.33 (2) | 50.00 (3) | 2.00 (6) |
| TOTAL | | 29.67 (89) | 58.00 (144) | 12.33 (67) | 100.00 (300) |

Chi-Square = 8.960(Not Significant level)df = 3

The educational status of respondents was poor as 85% of them are illiterates, and 13% are educated up to 10th class and only 2% are educated above 10th class.

However, when compared to illiterates, the respondents who are educated up to 10th class and above have established high status (35% and 50%) as against only 19% of the illiterates. Even though the sample of educated respondents is low, it is showing considerable influence on status of elderly.

7. No of Living Rooms

The number of living rooms of the respondents its influence on status of elderly has been elicited and presented in the Table-7.

**Table - 7
No of Living Rooms Vs Status of Elderly**

| S.No | Living Rooms | LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH | Total |
|-------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 1 Living Room | 40.21 (39) | 48.45 (47) | 11.34 (11) | 32.33 (97) |
| 2 | 2 Living Room | 25.40 (32) | 46.03 (58) | 28.57 (36) | 42.00 (126) |
| 3 | 3 + Living Room | 23.37 (18) | 32.50 (25) | 44.13 (34) | 17.67 (77) |
| TOTAL | | 29.67 (89) | 58.00 (144) | 12.33 (67) | 100.00 (300) |

Chi-Square = 18.303(Significant at 0.05 level)df = 10

The number of living rooms that the respondents are having denote their status. The respondents with more number of living rooms generally have more income and more standard of living. This aspect in the present study shown considerable influence on status of elderly.

More respondents dwelling in houses with three and above living rooms (44.13%) have established high status compared to (28.57%) with two living rooms and only (11.34%) of respondents living in single room huts. Thus the housing status of respondents proved to be one of the determinants of status of elderly.

8. Inter Relationship

The Inter Relationship of the respondents has been elicited and presented in the Table-8

**Table-8
Inter Relationship Vs Status of Elderly**

| S.No | Inter Relationship | LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH | Total |
|-------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Low | 29.63 (32) | 56.48 (61) | 13.89 (15) | 36.00 (108) |
| 2 | Medium | 36.00 (45) | 41.60 (52) | 22.40 (28) | 41.67 (125) |
| 3 | High | 17.91 (12) | 46.27 (31) | 35.82 (24) | 22.33 (67) |
| TOTAL | | 29.67 (89) | 48.00 (144) | 22.33 (67) | 100.00 (300) |

Chi-Square = 16.445(Significant at 0.01 level)df = 4

The status of inter-relationship among Family members was proved to have considerable influence on status of elderly

In familiar, when, inter-relationship was high, the status of elderly was also high. Around 36% of respondents living in families with high inter-relationship established high status, compared to 22.4% living in Medium status families and only 14% of those living in families where inter-relationship is poor

Thus, the nature inter-relation among family members is proved to be an important determinant of status of elderly.

Thus the socio-economic factors like 1. Present age of elderly, 2. Caste, 3. No of living room, 4. Education, and 5. Nature of inter-relationship at Family level are found as crucial determinants of status of elderly.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study and a careful analysis of the situation of landless rural aged were:

1. There is only (34.67 %) enjoy high power in family, 34.33 % manage domestic affairs themselves, 30.33% were never consulted in domestic items.
2. There is about 87 respondents (29 %) opined never female members seek their permission when they are going out of home. In

- case of financial affairs 116 respondents (38.67 %) opined never have any control on financial affairs.
3. The 91 respondents (30.33 %) opined that their children never consulted regarding their marriages. In case of kindness during sickness, 98 respondents (32.67 %) opined that they are given least importance in the family.
 4. Regarding spending of money during sickness, 34.10% were opined well, 28.00% opined average and 37.00% were not happy.
 5. The overall index on status of elderly at Family level show that majority of the respondents are having medium level of status (48%).
 6. More than fifty percent (50.32%) of the respondents aged between 60 to 65 years established high status of family level.
 7. More percentage of currently married respondents (living with spouse) (25.7%) is having high status.
 8. Around 36% of respondents living in families with high inter-relationship established high status.

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