



Familial Relationship of Elderly Women in Rural Andhra Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

Women in India especially older women are disadvantaged as they have a lower education, less work experience, low income, less access to assets and diminished authority within the family than men. As women will outnumber men in the older age groups, the social and financial security as well as the health hazards will be the most important problems faced by them. Hence, older women are more likely to be dependent upon family members; this put pressure on family members for care giving and maintaining cordial interaction/ relationship and adjustment with elderly women in the family. So, an attempt has been made to study the familial relationship of elderly women in rural Andhra Pradesh, India. The research results are based on interviews of 250 women, aged 60 years and above, who are in unorganized sectors. The findings reveal that an overwhelming percent of elderly women having very poor familial relationship/ interaction and bitter adjustment with their married sons and daughter-in-laws. The elderly females accorded low status as evident from their greater neglect, being majority felt a burden are largely seen in households of lower economic strata.

Keywords : Motor fitness, Anthropometric measurements, Skill efficiency and Prediction. Familial Relationship, Elderly Women, Low Status, Interaction. Adjustment, Bitter, Unorganised Sector, Rural India

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally in India, the aged are generally taken care of by the family members. Security and emotional satisfactions to the elderly is provided through a network of inter-personal relations, implicit reciprocal duties and obligation between the family members. The family, however, is playing a much reduced role now-a-days on account of the structural changes that have been taking place in the Indian society and the concomitant disintegration of the Joint family system, resulting in the rejection or neglect of the aged.

The relationship among the members of the family are inter related and these relationship go on changing as children are born, grown up and establish their own families. The family life cycle generally begins with the procreation of a new family through marriage. Kinship positions are more salient than explicit although the position of child, parent and spouse are always central in the family organization.

The inter-personal relations may vary throughout the life cycle of an individual and as far the aged is concerned. These inter-personal and their generational relationships more or less depend upon their experienced lives. Mandelbaum (1974) says "Each person lives, usually for most of his or her life, with others of his family that his social character and his individual personality are moulded by them that shifts in family roles and responsibilities, in their collective and cumulative effect have a great deal to do with changes in the entire society. So crucial are the family relations to a whole society that it is sometimes difficult to resist portraying them as though they were the single care of social relations, though infact family interactions may be as much affected by other social forces as they affect them".

In India about four-fifths of the elderly women are living in the rural unorganized sector. Majority of them are engaged in agricultural or allied activities. But their meager earnings are not adequate enough to support themselves, and a good number of them do not have their spouses. Most of them stay

with their children or other relatives. The only hope of support especially for the poor elderly, therefore, is that afforded by children and kinship groups (Naidu, D.A. and K. Rajasekhar, 1985). Under these circumstances it may not be an exaggeration to state that many of these women do not receive the same care and concern that they received when they were younger. The care of the elderly primarily depends how the family members perceive their problems and needs and how they regard the elderly.

On the other hand, Backman (1981) observers that many of the problems of inter-personal relations between the aged and their young contemporaries are attributed to what has come to be known as generation gap? In India, studies on the problems of the aged are very few and not much attention is paid to aged women in unorganized sector. More than half of the present days problem of the elderly females are the result of poor inter-personal adjustments. Hence, keeping in view the present paper is an attempt to understand the inter-personal (familial) relationship with family members of the elderly women in rural unorganized sector.

OBJECTIVE:

The main objective was to assess the inter-personal relationship, interaction and adjustment of elderly women with their married sons and daughter- in- laws.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Nagari Mandal of Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh. The unit of sampling for the study was females aged 60 years and above (senior citizens). In India, the sixtieth year has been considered as the boundary line for old age. Traditionally, attainment of 60 years "Shasthiabda-Purthi" is an important milestone in the life of a person. For the selection of sample, Chittoor District was purposively selected as it is predominantly an agricultural district. In this district Renigunta Mandal was selected for the study. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used in selecting the elderly females (60+ years) from the Universe. Nagari Mandal

has 25 revenue villages. Based on the size of the population, the villages were classified into large, medium and small. From them, 9 revenue villages were selected at random giving weightages to the proportion of large, medium and small villages to total villages in the universe. A list of all the elderly females aged 60 years and above in the selected villages was prepared from the recently up-dated voters list. From these lists a total of 250 elderly females (60+ years) were randomly selected by applying weightages to give fair representation to each village, the weight being the ratio of living elderly (60+ years) in a given village to the total number of elderly (60+ years) in the universe. The respondents were interviewed with the help of interview schedule.

INTERACTION WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

Inter-personal interaction forms a very important aspect of life which becomes more significant as age advances because of natural need for companionship with a decreasing ability to function. Cordial relationship among the family members is an important for better adjustment of elderly people. To have children and grand children rear is not only helpful to overcome loneliness, but it very often symbolises elder people goal in life. They identify themselves with their children and would like to help them in many ways. In this survey to assess pattern of interaction exists between the elderly and the family members, the sample were asked: "how do you feel about your interaction with family members?"

TABLE 1: Percentage of Elderly by present age and interaction with family members

Present age of the sample (in years)	Interaction with family members					Total No. of respondents
	Very Bitter	Bitter	Un decided	Cordial	Very Cordial	
60-64	14.4 (13)	34.5 (31)	16.7 (15)	27.8 (25)	6.7 (06)	100.0 (90)
65-69	28.8 (26)	37.8 (34)	20.0 (18)	11.1 (10)	2.3 (02)	100.0 (90)

TABLE 2: Percentage of Elderly Women by number of married Sons (Birth order) and relationship with them

Married Sons.	Relationship with married sons					Total No. of married sons.	Total No. of Respondent.
	Very Bitter	Bitter	Undecided	Cordial	Very Cordial		
Only one son	27.8 (27)	18.5 (18)	11.3 (11)	34.1 (33)	8.3 (08)	100.0 (97)	97
Two Sons							
First son	36.6 (30)	15.9 (13)	14.6 (12)	28.0 (23)	4.9 (04)	100.0 (82)	82
Second son	42.7 (35)	25.8 (22)	12.2 (10)	14.6 (12)	3.7 (03)	100.0 (82)	
Three Sons							
First Son	31.3 (16)	15.9 (08)	9.8 (05)	37.2 (19)	5.8 (03)	100.0 (51)	51
Second Son	41.2 (21)	25.5 (13)	13.7 (07)	19.6 (10)	---	100.0 (51)	
Third Son	37.2 (19)	21.6 (11)	11.8 (06)	29.4 (15)	---	100.0 (51)	
Four Sons							
First Son	20.0 (04)	25.0 (05)	10.0 (02)	40.0 (08)	5.0 (01)	100.0 (20)	20
Second Son	40.0 (08)	35.0 (07)	5.0 (01)	---	---	100.0 (20)	
Third Son	40.0 (08)	25.0 (05)	10.0 (02)	5.0 (01)	5.0 (01)	100.0 (20)	
Fourth Son	25.0 (05)	30.0 (06)	10.0 (02)	5.0 (01)	5.0 (01)	100.0 (20)	
Total	35.0 (173)	21.0 (108)	11.8 (58)	27.1 (134)	4.2 (21)	100.0 (494)	250

For the question as to "how be your relationship with married sons?" the answers indicate that the eldest sons are more cordial relationships with their mothers. This is found to be true in each category of married sons of the sample women. The youngest sons were found to be next to the eldest sons in having cordial relationship with their mothers. Surprisingly, sons of middle birth order were observed to be less cordial relationship with their mothers.

The findings clearly indicate that more than half of their married sons (56%) are having very bitter / bitter relationships with their mothers. On the other hand, three out of every ten married sons are having cordial / very cordial relationships with their mothers. Only a very negligible proportion is unable to decide the kind of relationships which they have with their married sons. Interestingly, in the case of women having one

70-74	31.4 (11)	48.6 (17)	8.6 (03)	11.4 (04)	---	100.0 (35)
75-79	30.0 (06)	50.0 (10)	10.0 (02)	10.0 (02)	---	100.0 (20)
80+	26.7 (04)	46.7 (07)	13.3 (02)	13.3 (02)	---	100.0 (15)
Total	24.0 (60)	39.6 (99)	16.0 (40)	17.2 (43)	3.2 (08)	100.0 (250)

The findings clearly indicate that, more than three-fifths of the elderly women (64%) reported that their kins were bitter in inter-personal interaction with them. In respect of one-fifths of the elderly (20%), interaction with kins was cordial, and rest is unable to decide the type of interaction with their family members.

Cordial interaction is found to be inverse in relation to the present age of the sample i.e., decreased steadily with advancing age of the elderly. In contrast, the proportion of the elderly stating bitter interaction from family members increased greatly from a low level of 49 per cent in the age group 60-64 to 80 percent in the age group of 70-79 years. In fact, the elderly reporting "Very bitter" interactions with kins are two times higher in age 65 and above than their counter parts (60-64 years). Thus, majority of the elderly aged 65 and above years are having poor interaction with their family members.

RELATIONSHIP WITH MARRIED SONS

The quality of relationship between elderly and their kin members especially married sons depends primarily on the natural attitudes and expectations in the family life. As the children grow old they were not only develop their own standards of behaviour and approaches to life, but also tend to change their style of life with in the family, including their relationship with their parents. The parent-child relationship may passes through stages of sub-ordination, equality and dominance. Peace and harmony of the elderly in the family depends upon the relationship between the elderly and the members of family particularly married sons and daughter-in-laws. Generally the adult children support the family while their spouses look after the domestic affairs.

son, more than two-fifths are stated cordial / very cordial relationship with their sons, as against an equal proportion are reported very bitter/bitter relationships with their offsprings (sons).

Thus, the increasing bitter relationships with rise in the birth order of married sons, suggests to having one or two sons rather than several sons in order to have cordial relationship in their advanced age groups.

RELATIONSHIP WITH DAUGHTER-IN-LAWS

With advancement in the age of the mother-in-law, particularly after becoming old, her prominence in the family affairs declines and that of the daughter-in-law dominance may increases. Generally, in the lower economic strata, parents mostly prefer to have close relatives as daughter-in-laws with

the expectation that they would be more affectionate towards them in their old age compared to outsiders or non-relatives. Hence, at what extent their expectations are true is examined in the below table.

TABLE 3: Percentage of Elderly by relationship of Daughter-in-laws and Interaction with them

Relationship of Daughter-in-law	Interaction with Daughter-in-laws					Total No. of Daughter-in-laws	Total No. of respondents
	Very poor	Poor	Satisfied	Cordial	Very Cordial		
Relatives	29.4 (62)	13.3 (28)	30.3 (64)	19.4 (41)	7.6 (16)	100.0 (211)	141
Non-relatives	42.8 (121)	27.9 (79)	18.4 (52)	8.5 (24)	2.4 (07)	100.0 (283)	109
Total	37.0 (183)	21.7 (107)	23.5 (116)	13.2 (65)	4.6 (23)	100.0 (494)	250

It is evident from the above data that, only around 18 per cent of the sample is having cordial/ very cordial relationship with their daughter-in-laws and slightly less than quarter of the mother-in-laws are having satisfactory relationship with their daughter-in-laws. On the other hand, nearly three-fifths of the sample viewed that they are having very poor/poor relationship with their daughter-in-laws.

As expected, daughter-in-laws who are related, to seem to be more cordial than non-relative daughter-in-laws towards their mother-in-laws. This is evident from the fact that the proportion of the sample stated cordial relationship with daughter-in-laws was found to be significantly higher when their daughter-in-laws are relatives (27%) than non-relative-in-laws (11%). It is interesting to note that, the non relative-in-laws (71%) are having higher percentage of bitter interaction than their counter-parts (43%). One probable reason may be largely due to ignoring / avoiding dowry and treating the relative daughter-in-laws as children, which other wise would be considered seriously if daughter-in-laws are non-relatives and thus, straining the relationship.

REASONS FOR POOR ADJUSTMENT

As exploration of the reasons for poor adjustment with their married sons and daughter-in-laws, results reveal that as they are mostly related to economic aspects. The below table demonstrates the important reasons cited by the sample women for their poor adjustment.

TABLE 4: Percentage of Elderly by reasons for poor adjustment with Married sons and Daughter-in-laws

S. No.	Reasons for poor adjustment	Number and percentage of Elderly	
		No.	Percentage
1.	Feeling as Burdensome	79	31.7
2.	Insistence to do work though incapable	51	20.4
3.	Extending help to married daughters	63	25.2
4.	Insistence to handover even their small savings meant for personal needs	36	14.5
5.	Ignoring suggestions of Elderly	23	9.2
Total		250	100.0

Feeling elderly as burdensome by their sons and daughter-in-laws emerged as the single most silent reason for poor adjustment between them. About one-quarter of the sample opinioned that extending help to their married daughters would leads to bitter adjustment between them. Insisted to do work even though they were actually incapable is the third most important cause of poor adjustment (20%), and having small savings for meeting personal needs is the fourth cause of disputes between them (15%). A few percentages of the surveyed women (10%) expressed that ignorance of their suggestions are the cause for poor adjustment between their sons and daughter-in-laws.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the study area the interpersonal relationship/interaction and adjustment of the elderly females with their married sons and daughter-in-laws are to be poor and would affect their life miserable. Among the children, sons are supposed to take care of the aged parents particularly in unorganized sector having no other source of support in old age. However, the relationship with married sons was found to be bitter/poor.

This study found that lower socio-economic status of the elderly female may be one of the main causes for poor/bitter interaction with their sons and daughter-in-laws. The results support the contention that a higher reliance on married sons might affect cordial relationship and leads to poor adjustment. In the absence of social assistance programmes for the elderly, reliance on son[s] is the only source of survival, this is particularly so in rural unorganized sector. Thus, it may be safely concluded that the higher reliance on sons (married) existing in the rural areas of South Central India are largely associated with the perception of the aged female regarding the utility to be derived from the sons as a potential sources of security in old age.

The perceived value of sons as a source of security in old age is considerably reduced and parents especially women assured of alternative source of security income through income generative activities. Effort should make to remove the conservations of to have atleast one son and education on the equality of son and daughter though planning the family size. An overwhelming majority of the aged is backing of fiscal support and they do not favour institutionalized support. Therefore, family support has to be strengthened through rural development reforms. Educative/ counseling to middle ages towards the handling the problems of old age are an urgent need. Further, it would also help them to plan their own old age much better.

It is high time an extension education and rural development programmes are necessary for the care and welfare of the elderly especially women who have development their energy in building up the nation.

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