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## A STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF ELDERLY WOMEN WITH FOCUS ON SUPPORT NETWORKS

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### ABSTRACT

In India, migrants from the villages and towns to cities predominate, resulting in breaking up of families into nuclear families. The aged who are left behind have to fend for themselves. This is leading to an increased danger of marginalization of the geriatric population due to migration, urbanization, and globalization. Another impact of the globalization is the increasing property rights and other social security measures. The study finds out 55 percent of respondents in urban were financially fully dependents followed by (54%) of the rural respondents. 98 percent of the respondents in urban were emotionally support expected from children with Elderly women followed by 49 percent in rural. WHO has proposed an "Active Ageing Framework" that can help policymakers in India to design programmes that can improve the overall quality of life of elderly women by focusing on three pillars i.e. Community Participation, Security and Health & well-being.

**KEYWORDS:** Elderly women, Emotional Support, NSO, Article 41.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Directive Principles of state policy of the Indian Constitution stated that the state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement. In pursuance of this, Directive Principle certain provisions are made for public assistance to older persons. Article 41 of the Constitution enjoins the state to make effective provision within the limits of its economic capacity and

development for public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want. 'What was exactly in the minds of the founding fathers of the Constitution is difficult to assess. One interpretation of Article 41 is that old age is mentioned with sickness and disablement and this does not clearly indicate to the 'aged group', which may still be capable of working. There is no other mention of the aged anywhere in the Constitution. However 'the framers of the Constitution did recognize the need for social security programmes to be supported by the state. It is clear from the NSO analysis that still the intergenerational financial assistance 1 prevailing in



India; around 78 percent of the economically dependent elderly were supported by their own children and 3 percent by the third generation (grand children). In the case of widows, 87 percent of the elderly received financial assistance from their children and 5 percent from their grand children.

The intergenerational support is not only restricted with financial assistance. It includes the physical care also. Around 84 percent of the physically immobile persons were by their own family members, mostly by daughters-in-law. However, around 8 percent of the elderly reported that nobody is there to help them. The proportion of males (117 percent) reported the unavailability of any one to give physical help was comparatively higher than among the females (7.5 percent).

Nowadays, the role of families in ease of older person has declined due to structural changes which have taken place in the Indian society and the concomitant disintegration of the joint family system, which results in the rejection or neglect of the aged.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

An exclusive research design was prepared to study the determinants of— A Study of Socio-Economic status of Elderly Women with focus on Support networks in rural and urban areas.

The sampling unit for the study was elderly women from both rural and urban areas of Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. Adopting random sampling technique for selection of 100 elderly women from each location i.e rural 100 and urban 100 samples, totaling a sample of 200.

The data pertaining to the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. In the present research study 'interview schedule' was used to collect primary data.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In the light of the objectives cited, the experimental data was analyzed and suitably interpreted with relevant statistical constants calculated. A brief description of the existing socio-economic conditions of the elderly women, in which they were living, was presented.

Occupational is regarded as an indicator of social status the nature of occupations and the degree of participation of respective occupational status was divided into eight categories self-employed agriculture, Self-employed-non agriculture, Casual laborers- agriculture, Casual laborers-non agriculture, House wife, Retired, Cultivators, Unemployed work data on occupational status is presented in the table.

**Table No: 1 Percentage distributions of the respondents by occupational status.**

| Occupation                      | Rural |     | Urban |     |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
|                                 | No    | %   | No    | %   |
| Self-employed-agriculture       | 7     | 7   | 6     | 6   |
| Self-employed-non agriculture   | -     | -   | 4     | 4   |
| Casual laborers- agriculture    | 64    | 64  | 26    | 26  |
| Casual laborers-non agriculture | -     | -   | -     | -   |
| House wife                      | 20    | 20  | 41    | 41  |
| Retired                         | 1     | 1   | -     | -   |
| Cultivators                     | 2     | 2   | 3     | 3   |
| Unemployed                      | 6     | 6   | 20    | 20  |
| <b>Total</b>                    | 100   | 100 | 100   | 100 |

Two third (64%) of the rural respondents were casual laborer or agriculture, while one-fifth (41%) of the urban respondents were housewife's. Nearly (3%) of the urban respondents were doing cultivators and A least percent of (2%) rural elderly women were doing cultivators.

The data concluded that the majority (64%) of the rural respondents were casual laborer or agriculture, while one-fifth (41%) of the urban respondents were housewife's.

Income is the consumption and savings opportunity gained by an entity within a specified time frame.

Income is also one of the indicators of socio-economic status the level of income determines the standard of living of the people which turn influences their economic activity.

Per capita income was assessed to determine the economic status of the elderly women. However the elderly women were not much educated or in working free previously or at present the total family income was considered to assess the SES as the spouse, children or in laws were earning members and staying with the aged women.

In assessing Socio-economic status, it is important that data on standard of living may be hard to interpret especially where the aged are part of extended families where resources are pooled. Individual income may give a poor picture of Socio-Economic Status.

**Table No 2: percentage distribution of the respondents by income level.**

| Income per Annam | Rural |     | Urban |     |
|------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
|                  | No    | %   | No    | %   |
| 5000 to 10000    | 60    | 60  | 57    | 57  |
| 100000 to 150000 | 13    | 13  | 8     | 8   |
| 150000 to 20000  | 14    | 14  | 13    | 13  |
| 20000 to 25000   | 9     | 9   | 15    | 15  |
| 25000 above      | 4     | 4   | 7     | 7   |
| <b>Total</b>     | 100   | 100 | 100   | 100 |

The data in the above table shows that the respondents income levels. The Majority (60%) of the respondents in rural and more than half (57%) of the respondents in rural were have up to Rs.10000 per Annam. Nearly two third (15%) of respondents have the Rs. 20,000 to 25,000 income for Annam followed by nearly one tenth of (9%) respondents in rural area (15%) of respondents in were have the level of income rural areas 15,000 to 20,000. Lowest percent of respondents were have Rs.25000 above income in both areas.

It was concluded that majority of the respondents (60%) of the respondents in rural and more than half (57%) of the respondents in urban had Rs.5, 000 to 10,000 income per Annam. Today individual educational choices are limited not only by personal abilities but also by families' capacities to finance education for their elderly women.

## FINANCIAL STATUS

In India, generally, persons aged 15 to 59 years are supposed to form the population of working ages and at age 60, people generally retire or withdraw themselves from work. Thus, the Old age dependency ratio is defined as the number of persons in the age-group 60 or more per 100 persons in the age-group 15-59 years.

Table no 3 provides information on households receiving support (financial and in kind) by their perception of whether such support will be continued in the future. Often family, friends or relative provide only one time assistance.

**Table No 3: Percentage distribution of the respondents by financial dependence.**

| Type of dependence  | Rural |     | Urban |     |
|---------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
|                     | No    | %   | No    | %   |
| Fully dependent     | 54    | 54  | 55    | 55  |
| Partially dependent | 31    | 31  | 29    | 29  |
| Independent         | 15    | 15  | 16    | 16  |
| <b>Total</b>        | 100   | 100 | 100   | 100 |

The above table shows that majority respondents (55%) in urban were financially fully dependents followed by (54%) of the rural respondents also depended fully on financial matters.

Nearly one-third (31%) of the rural and more than one fourth (29%) of urban respondents are partially

dependents in financially.

A less proportion of respondents in both rural (15%) and (16%) were financially independents.

A person is considered economically independent if he/she does not require to take financial help from others in order to live a normal life. The survey findings are revealed that more half of the respondents in both rural (54%) and urban (55%) are fully dependents. It is significantly started that in the financial matters Elderly people are fully depended in their family members. Its reflects a greater impact on Health, Psychological and social security of the Elderly.

**Table No 4: shows the sources of financial support as well as support received in kind by the households, if any.**

| Person finance Dependence | Rural |     | Urban |     |
|---------------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
|                           | No    | %   | No    | %   |
| Spouse                    | 24    | 24  | 6     | 6   |
| Son                       | 39    | 39  | 22    | 22  |
| Daughter                  | 40    | 40  | 78    | 78  |
| Others                    | 5     | 5   | -     | -   |
| <b>Total</b>              | 100   | 100 | 100   | 100 |

The above table shows that majority respondents (78%) in urban and 40% of the rural respondents are depended fully in Daughter on financial matters. Nearly one-third (39%) of the rural and more than one fourth (22%) of urban respondents are depended by Son for financially. One fourth (24%) of the rural respondents and least proportion (6%) were financially depended in Spouse.

The findings are revealed that more than half of the respondents in both urban (78%) and rural (40%) are fully dependents on Daughter. It is significantly started that in the financial matters Elderly people are fully depended in their family members. Its reflects a greater impact on Health, Psychological and social security of the Elderly.

#### **TYPE OF SUPPORT YOU ARE EXPECTED FROM YOUR CHILDREN**

Till few decades ago, when average age of women in India was less than 60, condition of older women was never even mentioned. But now with fast growing elderly population, increased life expectancy and higher percentage of elderly women in Indian elderly population, issues concerning elderly women cannot be ignored any longer. If ignored today, this may turn in to a major social development challenge. Focus should be shifted on older women. Since they have specific needs they need special attention.

**Table No 5: Percentage distribution of respondents by Support of children.**

| Support of children  | Rural |       | Urban |       |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                      | No    | %     | No    | %     |
| Physical and medical | 68    | 68.00 | 57    | 57.00 |
| Financial            | 19    | 19.00 | 41    | 41.00 |
| Emotional            | 49    | 49.00 | 98    | 98.00 |

In India, people generally respect the aged and take care of them in a respectful manner. Conventionally, the family system has a main responsibility of the taking care of the elderly. In most cases, the elderly live with their son or daughter (Nayar 1999; Deshai, 1982; OASIS, 1999; Help age International, 2005). In this point of view the respondents are expected different standards of support like Majority (98%) of the respondents in urban were emotionally support expected from children with Elderly women followed by 49 percent in rural. A least of one fifth (19%) of the responds were financially support in Elderly women.

## CONCLUSION

WHO has proposed an “Active Ageing Framework” that can help policymakers in India to design programmes that can improve the overall quality of life of elderly women by focusing on three pillars i.e. Community Participation, Security and Health & well-being.

Hence it is proposed that, programmes for senior citizens should evolve in response to these social, political, economic factors and most importantly should be gender sensitive owing to increased proportion of elderly women and acknowledging their vulnerability and special needs.

Based on the material presented in the foregoing sections, some helpful ideas for enhancing inter-generational relationships can be suggested.

1. Recognize that despite changes in its form and functions, family is still a viable organization that can be enabled to provide high quality care to all its members including the aged.

2. Emphasize the idea of interdependence between and among generations, at all levels of discourse. As people start to realize the richness of this idea and meaningfully operationalize it, inter-generational conflict will wane.

Advocate for and promote social policies that support productive aging so that older people can continue to play meaningful roles in the lives of their families and communities. So long as they are contributing and giving something to the familial group, reciprocity will stay alive and feed inter-generational relationships.

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