

Perception of Second Generation Towards Old Age Problems

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ABSTRACT Four hundred and eighty son and daughter-in-law drawn by a random sample of households of the urban areas of Hisar, Sirsa and Bhiwani districts of Haryana were asked to check what they considered were the problems of elderly in nine areas. Results indicated that both middle aged children perceived the number of problems in their parents. But the son of the family perceived more problems in their parents in comparison to the daughter-in-law.

INTRODUCTION

A host of problems confront an individual at the time of retirement, mainly loss of status, lowering of income, social isolation etc. But one of the old is what other think about old age and of the problems of the aged. Western gerontological literature contains many studies, that have assessed the attitudes of the public towards the aged (Bengtson, 1976; Kahana, 1982; Troil and Bengtson, 1982). Similar studies in India are few and far between. Despite some migration, extended families consisting of grand parents, parents and grand children living together are not uncommon in India. Even otherwise the grandparents and child constitute a functional unit for most purposes. As such in the Indian context the status of the elderly would primarily depend on the evaluative perceptions of their children & grand children and secondary on others.

Several earlier studies (Anantharaman, 1979; Bengtson, 1976; Kahana, 1982; Kullai Reddy, 1984; Nara-Simha Reddy, 1985; Ramamurti, 1978) have indicated generational differences only with regard to values, attitudes, interests and other aspects of behaviour. But, since we needed empirically based observations pertaining to how middle aged (son and daughter-in-law) subjects in joint families viewed the problems pertaining to the aged, specifically, two gen-

eration families were selected. The objective of the study was to assess how problems pertaining to the elderly men and women are perceived by the middle aged son and daughter-in-law. An additional aspect of the present study of compare the perception of middle aged son and daughter-in-law on the problems of elderly. A null hypothesis formulated for the present study was that there is no significant difference among the perception of son and daughter-in-law regarding the problems of aged.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The participants were son and daughter-in-law of different categories of retired old people. The sample consisted of 480 individuals belonging to two generation households living in urban area of Bagar Pocket in Haryana State which consists three districts city i.e. Sirsa, Bhiwani and Hisar. In the first phase, 240 households were drawn through a random sampling taking care to pick only those households where old people and middle aged children were staying together. In the second phase, From each household, one elder son and one elder daughter-in-law was individually interviewed which constituted the sample for present study.

A higher proportion of son and daughter-in-law (80%) were university educated and diploma holders and rest of were high school educated. Of the son of old people 82 per cent were working full time and 50 per cent of daughter-in-law were housewife and 50 per cent were engaged in service.

MEASURES

Problem inventory for older people (Ramamurthi, 1989) was used. This inventory consisted of important problems of the aged in each of the area of health, home and family,

financial, social, personal, religious, personality, personal betterment, leisure time utilization and vocational and occupational problems. The perception of second generation (son and daughter-in-law) about the old age problems was described by frequency and percentages and 'Z' test was used to see the significant differences among the perception of son and daughter-in-law.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows percentages of perception of son and daughter-in-law regarding personal problems of old people. The results indicate a few differences in perception by son and daughter-in-law. Both son (49.58%) and daughter-in-law (57.50%) perceived mild health problems in old people. Whereas, both son (4.17%) and daughter-in-law (2.92%) perceived few severe

similar proportion of son (1.25%) and daughter-in-law (1.67%) perceived severe personal betterment problems of old people. A higher proportion of son (15%) than daughter-in-law believed that old people have severe vocational and occupational problems. Although, similar proportion of son (50.83%) and daughter-in-law (45.48%) perceived moderate vocational and occupational problems. It is very clear that though the trend of perception of old age parents problems by son and daughter-in-law in different area was same by some differences in perception were there. The data in Table reveals that higher percentage of son in comparison to daughter-in-law perceived severe problems related to health and personality. Higher percentage of son and daughter-in-law realized mild problems faced by the old in family.

Socio-economic problems of old people was experienced by son and daughter-in-law are presented in table 2. Similar proportion of son (70.83%) and daughter-in-law (76.25%) perceived mild family problems of old people. Severity of family problem was perceived only by small percentage of son and daughter-in-law. Economic problems of the old also got attention of second generation as higher percentage of both son (55.42%) and daughter-in-law (58.75%) realized mild economic problems of aged people. Similarly, very low percentage of both son (1.25%) and daughter-in-law (1.67%)

Table 1: Perceived Personal Problems of old people

<i>Variable Problems</i>	<i>Son (n=240)</i>	<i>Daughter-in-law (n=240)</i>
Health		
Mild	119 (49.58)	138 (57.50)
Moderate	111 (46.25)	95 (39.38)
Severe	10 (4.17)	7 (2.92)
Personality		
Mild	21 (8.25)	38 (15.83)
Moderate	204 (85.00)	186 (77.50)
Severe	15 (6.75)	16 (6.67)
Personal Betterment		
Mild	109 (45.42)	128 (53.33)
Moderate	128 (53.33)	108 (45.00)
Severe	3 (1.25)	4 (1.67)
Vocational Occupational		
Mild	82 (34.17)	99 (41.25)
Moderate	122 (50.83)	131 (54.58)
Severe	36 (15.00)	10 (4.17)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

health problems in old people, though percentage differences is small. In comparison to daughter-in-law (77.50%), a greater percentage of son (85.00%) perceived moderate personality problems of old people. Equal percentage of son and daughter-in-law, 6.75 per cent, respectively perceived severe personality problems.

Compared to son, a greater proportion of daughter-in-law (53.33%), perceived mild personal betterment problems of old people. Though

Table 2: Socio-economic problems of old people

<i>Variable Problems</i>	<i>Son (n=240)</i>	<i>Daughter-in-law (n=240)</i>
Family		
Mild	170 (70.83)	183 (76.25)
Moderate	60 (25.00)	52 (21.67)
Severe	10 (4.17)	4 (2.08)
Economic		
Mild	133 (55.42)	141 (58.75)
Moderate	104 (43.33)	95 (39.58)
Severe	3 (1.25)	4 (1.67)
Social		
Mild	1330 (54.17)	134 (55.83)
Moderate	106 (44.17)	102 (42.50)
Severe	4 (1.67)	4 (1.67)
Religious		
Mild	208 (86.67)	193 (80.42)
Moderate	23 (9.58)	37 (15.42)
Severe	9 (3.75)	10 (4.17)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

also perceived economic problems of old people to be very severe. Regarding the social problem of old people the Table point out that equal proportion of both son and daughter-in-law, that is, 1.67 per cent perceived severe social problem of aged people. While similar proportion of both son (54.17%) and daughter-in-law (55.83%) also perceived mild social problems. Religion problems is another aspect of socio-economic problems and it was seen that higher percentage of both son (86.67%) and daughter-in-law (80.42%) perceived mild religious problems of old people and comparatively, it can be said that son realized more problems than daughter-in-law. Equal proportion of both son and daughter-in-law 22.92% perceived mild leisure time utilization problems of elderly. Whereas both son (56.42%) and daughter-in-law (56.25%) perceived moderate leisure time utilization problems of old people.

To calculate overall problems of old data on different aspect was merged and overall problems of old people as felt by son and daughter-in-law is described in table 3. Almost equal percentage of son (60.83%) and daughter-in-law (58.33%) perceived moderate problems of old people. Similarly, very few both son (9.17%) and daughter-in-law (8.34%) perceived severe problems of old people. As clear from the table, the differences in perception of both son and daughter-in-law is not large but son perceive more severe and moderate problems of old people in almost all areas than daughter-in-law.

Table 3: Perceived overall problems of old people

Problems/ Perception	Son (n=240)	Daughter-in-law (n=240)
Mild	72 (30.00)	80 (33.33)
Moderate	146 (60.83)	40 (58.33)
Severe	22 (9.17)	20 (8.34)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

ter-in-law is not large but son perceive more severe and moderate problems of old people in almost all areas than daughter-in-law.

The mean intergender difference scores as perceived by son and daughter-in-law towards old age problems are presented in table 4. There were significant differences in the perception of middle aged generation towards problems of elderly. The perception of daughter-in-law was lower (M=46.40) when compared to that of son of the family (M=48.05). Thus the results of the

Table 4: Intergender differences in perceived old age problems

Problem/ Perception	Mean	Std. error	'Z' calculated
Son	48.05	1.20	5.63**
Daughter	46.40	0.99	

** Significant at 0.01 per cent level

present study contradict the hypothesis that there are no significant differences among the son and daughter-in-law in their perception of problems pertaining to the aged in Haryana.

DISCUSSION

Results of the present study indicate the differences and similarities in the perception of second generation about old age problems. From the above results, it can be concluded that the middle aged generation (both son and daughter-in-law) accepted that aging is loaded with problems to some extent. Comparatively, the son of the family felt that their parents had more problems in old age. The reason behind this may be that they have more emotional attachment with the old of the family and realise how their parents have worked hard for upbringing of their children. While daughter-in-law is the one who enter the family in later stage and emotional bond are mostly formed at early stage and she has not seen the old working hard for upliftment of the family.

The finding of this study is also supported by researches of Bengston (1982) and Jamuna (1981) as these researchers also reported that middle aged children or son and daughter-in-law of the elderly were better able to emphasize the problems of the aged when compared to young generation (grand children).

It is evident that despite the significant differences among the two generations in perception of problems of the aged, there is residual level of agreement in the overall perception of problems of the aged by middle generation. This common denominator of agreement should be stabilised and strengthened. Intervention programme through media should be launched to educate the public opinion on the problems of aged. In traditional India, the old were revered and respected, but today this situation is threatening to deteriorate. It is therefore, of utmost importance and need to strengthen the age-old

values and family ties that give elderly a respectful place in the family and society such that their care would not become a state problem.

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