

## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF ELDERLY WITHIN THE FAMILY

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### ABSTRACT

Elderly are the most respectable persons in our society and also in the family, as they have experienced a lot, more than the young ones. Due to generation gap and modern life style, they need more adjustments with family members in their family, so that they can spend their life properly. Hence, the present study "**Interpersonal relationships of Elderly within the family**" was undertaken in Jaipur city of Rajasthan. The study was conducted on 50 families including 50 couples above 65 years and their young children, daughters-in-law, grand children and any other relatives. Self constructed questionnaire was used for data collection by using convenience sampling method. The response of Elderly was collected at their suitable setting like parks during evening walk and at home in their free time. Frequent visits were made for establishing rapport with respondents and their family members. The data were analyzed by using frequency and percentage. The main findings indicate that interpersonal relationships of elderly within the family are satisfactory, because of love and affection between the family members.

**KEYWORDS:** Interpersonal Relationships, Elderly, family

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### Introduction

The family is equally important in later life as during the childhood. Family is an important support group that creates joy and sense of belongingness through shared time together and expression of love and affection especially during old age. The family also provides assistance, such as financial support or help throughout the whole life. The quality of family relationships is established in the early years like marriage and parenthood & carried over into later years. The traditional family leads the full form of strength, belongingness and share responsibilities between different family members.

The elderly were the most respected members of the family in traditional Indian society. Taking care of them was mainly the responsibility of their children. The majority of the elderly living with their off springs also preferred living with them as a desirable choice. However, the

growth of 'individualism' in modern life led to their alienation and isolation from family and society. Migration from rural areas resulted in the growth of more nuclear families in towns and cities. This affected the care of the elderly.

### ***Ageing in India: Some Reflections***

The aged population in India is currently the second largest in the world. In modern times, for all practical purposes the individuals who are above sixty years of age are considered to be aged or 'elderly' of the State. In academic research, retirement age is often taken as an index of aged status. Chronological age of fifty-eight or sixty is considered the beginning of old age. However, existence of mass poverty, growing trends towards nuclear family, greater life expectancy and deterioration of cultural values and norms are endangering stumbling blocks on the part of the aged to cope with the changing environment. As a result, the aged population in India is accompanied by a series of problems in their day-to-day life. The major areas of problems, faced by the aged individuals are: income generation, health, use of free time, social security, social participation, dignity and respect and so on. These problems are because of the reasons mainly geographical and cultural differences, and disproportionate socio-economic facilities to urban and rural areas in terms of education, sanitation, health and housing. As a result, the Government of India has undertaken some legislative and policy measures for the welfare of the aged.

Industrialization, urbanization, education and exposure to western life styles are bringing changes in values and life style. Much higher costs of bringing up and educating children and pressures for gratification of their desires affect the share of income for the care of parents. Due to shortage of space in urban areas with higher rents, migrants prefer to leave their parents in their native places. Changing roles and expectations of women, their concepts of privacy and space, desire should not be encumbered by caring responsibilities of old people for long periods.

### ***Elderly person in the family***

***The elderly, who have strong family relationships, often feel that they can turn to family members for assistance when needed. As older people experience losses in life such as the death of close friend or a spouse and changes in health or mobility, they may reach out to family for support. Time with family, help with chores and business and expressions of love become even more important as the elderly need adjustment to major changes in their lives.***

***Older persons, enjoy high prestige as custodians of conventional wisdom. As long as they are physically able, they also contribute to productive work in the household. Within the extended family, they enjoy emotional and physical security. The family continues to be an important provider of care and supportive services to older persons.***

Elderly are the most experienced and respectable persons of the society. Age 65 is considered the beginning of late adulthood. The elderly people shares their experiences and grow their positive relationships with spouse, children, daughter-in-law, grand children and other relatives. During this age, spouses provide extraordinary companionship and support when health and mobility decline.

The elderly people feel some loneliness and boredom during these years of life. They place a high value on a give & take with their children. Children and grand children both give to and receive from the older generations who realize that grandparent is a positive great experience and can be a source of fulfillment and happiness.

Siblings and relatives seem to be an important "insurance policy" in late adulthood. For older adults, relationship between siblings and relatives are unique and important, often this is the only continuous family relationships that endure from childhood to old age.

Daughter-in-law & in-laws both have to prepare earlier for their sound relationships. Friendly behavior will make the relationships sound. Old age is the stage, in which the adjustment and responsibilities among family members is increased towards old age person due to generation gap as well as modern life-style. Older people who maintain healthy and positive relationships with their children or relatives enjoy their later life. Hence the investigators planned and conducted present study entitled "The Inter Personal relationships of Elderly with in the Family".

### ***Operational definitions:-***

Family - A family is a group of people related by blood, marriage or adoption.

Interpersonal relationships:-An Interpersonal relationship is a relatively long term association between two or more people. In this research, it means relationships between elderly persons and their children as well as grand children.

Elderly:-Age 65 is considered a milestone and the beginning of late adulthood.

### ***DELIMITATIONS:-***

- The study was delimited to only having three generations' families.
- This study was delimited to the elderly couples above 65 years.
- The study was delimited to the families in which both old spouse are alive and living together.

### **Material and Methods:**

The current study of old person's interpersonal relationship in the urban area of Jaipur was planned to contact them in their homes and public places like parks. All elderly persons in the age group of 65 years and above living with their spouse, children and grand children were included in the study. The samples for the present study were selected by convenience or availability basis i.e. through accidental sampling. The sample of the study consisted of 50 couples living either only with their spouse, or with their unmarried or married children along with grandchildren. A self constructed questionnaire was used which consisted questions regarding opinions of persons from each group i.e. elderly, spouse, children and grand children. The investigators personally contacted each elderly couple and their family members. Each individual in the study was subjected to personal interview. The data was analyzed using frequency and percentages.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:-****Table 1: Living Arrangements among the Aged**

Living Arrangements	Total(n=100) %.(No)		
Both Spouse along with any other person	12 (12)		
With Unmarried Children	17 (17)	74 (74)	80 (80)
With Married Sons	57 (57)		
With Married Daughters	6 (6)		
With Other Relatives	8 (8)		

As depicted in table 1, it was observed that in the study area about 80% of the respondents were living with their children: 57% with their married sons, 17% with their unmarried children and 6% with their married daughters. The data indicates that the traditional impact still persists. In the Indian society aged parents do not generally prefer to live with their married daughters, unless it becomes inevitable. Out of the 6 respondents who were living with their daughters, in the case of 4 respondents their daughters along with their families had come to live with them to take care of the aged parents.

**Table 2: Distribution of elderly as per psycho-social problems.**

Problems	Male (n=50)	Female (n=50)	Total (n=100)
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Loneliness	23 (46%)	20 (40)	43 (43%)
Feeling neglected or ignored	25 (50%)	30 (60)	55 (55%)
Sexual dissatisfaction	6 (12)	1 (2)	7 (7%)
Exploitation	12 (24)	10 (20)	22 (22%)

Table 2 shows that 46% elderly male and 40% females were facing loneliness where 60% females and 50% males had the feelings of being neglected by the kins and other family members. Only few respondents (7%) elderly were facing sexual dissatisfaction. Both males 24% and females 20% indicated some kind of family exploitation.

**Table 3: opinions regarding old age of the elderly persons and other members of family**

Statement	Elderly		Son (74) (17+57)	Daughter (6)	In-Laws (57)	Grand Children (50)	Relatives and other (8)
	Male (50)	Female (50)					
<b>1. Attitude Towards the old age and Elderly Persons</b>							
Respectful	20(40%)	25(50%)	46(62.16%)	5(83.33%)	24(42.11%)	40(80%)	5(62.5%)
Normal	25(50%)	17(34%)	22(29.73%)	1(16.67%)	23(40.35%)	7(14%)	2(25%)
Not Cordial	5(10%)	8(16%)	6(8.11%)	0(00%)	10(17.54%)	3(6%)	1(12.5%)
<b>2. Main Problems in Old Age</b>							
Health	8(16%)	7(14%)	34(45.94%)	4(66.67%)	10(17.54%)	22(44%)	2(25%)
Economic	40(80%)	5(10%)	14(18.92%)	0(00%)	9(15.79%)	3(6%)	2(25%)
Social Adjustment	2(4%)	38(76%)	26(35.14%)	2(33.33%)	38(66.67%)	25(50%)	4(50%)
<b>3. When Person is very old and needs help, who can be of best help</b>							
Sons	19(38%)	11(22%)	40(54.05%)	1(16.67%)	10(17.54%)	15(30%)	6(75%)
Daughters	2(4%)	5(10%)	00(00%)	3(50.0%)	5(8.77%)	2(4%)	0(00%)
Spouse	10(20%)	15(30%)	10(13.51%)	0(00%)	16(28.07%)	6(12%)	2(25%)
Self	10(20%)	3(6%)	14(18.92%)	1(16.67%)	14(24.56%)	7(14%)	0(00%)
God	9(18%)	15(30%)	7(9.46%)	1(16.67%)	10(17.54%)	2(4%)	0(00%)
neighbors/ village/ community	00(00%)	1(2%)	3(4.05%)	0(00%)	2(3.51%)	7(14%)	0(00%)
<b>4. Opinion regarding Old Age Homes</b>							
Favor	0(00%)	0(00%)	0(00%)	0(00%)	0(00%)	0(00%)	3(37.5%)
Not Favor	50(100%)	50(100%)	74(100%)	6(100%)	57(100%)	50(100%)	5(62.5%)

Table 3 depicts results about the opinions of family members towards old age. Elderly person is highly respectable among every member of family and society. Some respondents opined that it is normal phase of life like other phases.

The elderly respondents were also asked about problems of the aged. Interestingly, more than 15% of the respondents ranked health problems as the main problems. The male respondents (80%) cited the economic reasons as the main problem in the old age, whereas 76% female respondents mentioned the social adjustment as the main problem. It may be inferred that in the Indian society, the males are involved in more economic activities and the females are engaged more in household work which involves more interaction adjustments with the other members of the household. Although sons stated that 46% had health related problems as the main concern.

Regarding the question: "when a person becomes very old and needs physical help, who do you, think can be of best help to the elderly person?", 38% males and 22% females of the elderly respondents were of the opinion that sons and their family members should provide the necessary help to the aged parents, reflecting the continuation of the traditional practice in India. In case the old age persons do not have such help, the elderly respondents felt that neighbors or the village community should provide the needed care and support to the aged. Some old people showed their faith towards God.

The elderly respondents were also asked about their opinion regarding old age homes for which 100% of them did not favor. The main objection expressed was that this institutional arrangement does not provide the aged with the required psychological satisfaction.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The care and support for the elderly population in India is becoming a burning and important issue as apparent from the growing number of the elderly population. It is the family that is found to be playing the most vital role in India in this respect, especially the traditional family. This favored by the elderly persons that, respectable and deserving treatment should be given to the aged persons in the family. It is therefore necessary that, efforts must be made to strengthen the family support for taking care of the elderly population. Old age persons were happy with their sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren to share life experiences co-operate with their daughters-in-law in financial and house-hold matters.

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