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SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE ELDERLY A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PATIALA AND MOHALI DISTRICTS

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ABSTRACT

Aging is a global phenomenon and in many countries, the aged are increasingly being considered a burden on their families and societies. It is vital that they are encouraged to continue playing productive social roles and that their relations be fostered. With increase in longevity and multigenerational groups in population, their relations assume to be of crucial importance.

Keywords: *Elderly, Present conditions, Family relations, Loneliness, Religious activities.*

Families are changing enormously in their composition, roles of their members, and quality of the intra-familial relationships. These changes are much more visible in developed countries than in the developing world. In the U.S., for example, it has become difficult to talk about a typical family. We have nuclear families, single-parent families, remarried and step families, non-marital heterosexual and homosexual cohabitation families, foster and adoptive families, and multi-adult households. Nearly one in three Americans is a member of a blended or step family. The existence of these complex groupings who may not be sharing a household and a set of family roles and values, has led to

talk about family contexts, a type of cognitive network. Increasingly, unlike in the family of the past, inter-generational relationships in these groupings are more affection based than necessity and hence are more complex and variable. Even in less changed situations, the family's ability to care for its elderly appears to be diminishing. In a study of adult children's perceptions of their responsibility to provide care for dependent elderly parents, adult children rated the amount of financial, emotional and physical support families should and could give to elderly persons described in four vignettes.

The family is the primary source of social support for the elderly. Therefore, the

impact of modernization and urbanization on the elderly and family has important implications in the adjustment process of later life. The continued role of the elderly in the household with responsibilities to fulfill can become a liability in old age when they are financially and physically less able, leading to preoccupation with worries and anxiety.

Survey of Literature

The present study is descriptive, interpretative and analytical in nature. When generational studies have been conducted, the generations have been treated elderly as discrete categories. As there has been a shift in the nature of relations in all societies over the years. The lifestyle and expectations are rapidly changing. With an increase in geographical and social mobility there occurs a change in relationships and the magnitude of shared experiences among the family members.

Methodology

The research has been undertaken where a total of 400 respondents were selected from the two Districts of Punjab i.e Patiala and Mohali. Out of these 400 respondents, 200 were selected from Patiala and 200 from Mohali. For Patiala District in rural area four villages were selected namely

Hasanpur, Zalalpur, Sanour and Choura from each village 25 samples of questionnaires were interview from the respondents. Also for Patiala urban areas namely Urban Estate Phase I, II and ShivalikVihar and Gurudev Nagar were selected and from each area 25 samples of questionnaires were interview from the respondents. Moreover for Mohali District four villages were selected namely Sohana, Mataur, Kumbara, Manoli and for urban area Phase I,II, III,IV were selected and from each areas 25 samples of questionnaires were interview from the respondents.

Objectives

- The major objectives of the study are to know the relationship of the elderly with their children and grandchildren.
- To explore present condition of life and relations with children
- To explore the reasons of being neglected and isolated
- To access where the elderly deprive of the emotional support.

Tools of Data Collection

- Structure interview schedule was designed and utilized for collecting the data
- On the spot observation.

Analysis

Simple statistical methods percentages were used at appropriate places for analyzing the data.

Present Conditions of Life

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents according to rating present condition of life

S.No	Rating present condition of life	Distributions of Respondents						Total
		District Wise		Gender Wise		Region Wise		
		Patiala	Mohali	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	
1	Happy	73 (36.5)	61 (30.5)	42 (21)	60 (30)	51 (25.5)	60 (30)	102 (25.5)
2	Contented	74 (37)	88 (44)	96 (48)	72 (36)	84 (42)	70 (35)	168 (42)
3	So-So	38 (19)	27 (13.5)	54 (27)	30 (15)	42 (21)	40 (20)	84 (21)
4	Just pulling them	15 (7.5)	24 (12)	8 (4)	38 (19)	23 (11.5)	30 (15)	46 (11.5)
Total		200	200	200	200	200	200	400

Figures in parentheses are in percentages

It is clear from the above data greater than two fifth of the elderly (42%) had rate their present condition of life as contented. While less than one fourth of the elderly (25.5%) rate their present condition of life as happy. However a smaller proportion of the elderly (11.5%) rate their present condition of life as just pulling them.

The main problems in which old people suffer are economic privations, health complaints and feelings of boredom. The use of additional free-time at one's disposal after retirement. This state of affairs becomes a social problem when considerable number of people feels it as a problem. People's own perception of the conditions that exist is many times inarticulate.

In the context of the region wise comparison, it is clear from the above table that of the total respondent's higher proportion of the urban elderly (30%) rate their present condition of life happy when compared to rural elderly (25.5%). Similarly a slightly greater proportion of urban elderly (15%) were rating their present condition of life as just pulling

them when compared to rural elderly (11.5%).

It is observed that the female elderly (30%) rate their present condition of life as happy were greater in number than the male elderly (21%). The female elderly always tried to satisfy with their lives as compared to male elderly. A greater proportion of the male elderly rate their lives contended (48%) and so-so (27%) when compared to female elderly (15%) and (19%) respectively.

Across districts, the data revealed that the Patiala elderly (36.5%) largely reported that they are happy with their lives when compared to Mohali elderly (30.5%). The data further shows that the greater proportion of the Mohali elderly (12%)

rate their lives as just pulling them when compared to Patiala elderly (7.5%). In Mohali the children and in laws may be did not care for the elderly people due to busy schedule in life.

Bose (1982) have also brought out the fact that even with the advent of modernization, the elderly are still respected and cared for as a tradition.

Relations with Children

Affection and respect from family, friends and society is a must for happy life. It is essential to your life in all phases of life, but it is reciprocity of feelings, if we the aged behave well, in an appropriate manner towards them, we automatically get returns of the same feelings.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of respondents according relations with children and in laws

S.No	Relations with your children and in laws	Distributions of Respondents						Total
		District Wise		Gender Wise		Region Wise		
		Patiala	Mohali	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	
1	Happy	102 (51)	94 (47)	98 (49)	98 (49)	85 (42.5)	111 (55.5)	196 (49)
2	Friendly	50 (25)	68 (34)	62 (31)	56 (28)	64 (32)	54 (27)	118 (29.5)
3	Strained	8 (4)	9 (4.5)	5 (2.5)	12 (6)	11 (5.5)	6 (3)	17 (4.25)
4	Not bad	40 (20)	29 (14.5)	35 (17.5)	34 (17)	40 (20)	29 (14.5)	69 (17.25)
Total		200	200	200	200	200	200	400

Figures in parentheses are in percentages

The above data revealed that a greater proportion of the elderly (49%) were happy with their children and friendly (29.5%).

Region wise data shows that a greater proportion of the urban elderly (55.5%) were happy with the relations with their children. While a greater proportion of the rural elderly (32%) express their relations friendly with their children and in laws.

Regarding gender wise a greater proportion of the male elderly (31%) express their relations friendly with their children and in laws as compared to female elderly (28%). Both male and female have a similar proportion of relation with their children and in laws not bad.

Across districts, a large number of the Patiala elderly (51%) reported that they are

happy with their children and in laws when compared to Mohali elderly (47%). While Mohali elderly (34%) express their relations friendly with their children and in Patiala it is (25%).

Kaur et al. (1987) emphasised the unsatisfactory behavior of the family towards the dependent elderly.

Relations with Family Member

It is considered to be a moral duty of children to look after their old parents. Social norms are so effective in this regard that many children sacrifice their personal comforts and interest for fulfilling their obligations towards parents. Such value system is an effective and reliable source which operates as social security for the aged and the infirm.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of respondents according to feeling neglected by family members or friends

S.No	Feeling neglected by family members or friends	Distributions of Respondents						Total
		District Wise		Gender Wise		Region Wise		
		Patiala	Mohali	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	
1	Yes	35 (17.5)	42 (21)	28 (14)	49 (24.5)	39 (19.5)	38 (19)	77 (19.25)
2	No	165 (82.5)	158 (79)	172 (86)	151 (75.5)	161 (80.5)	162 (81)	323 (80.75)
Total		200	200	200	200	200	200	400

Figures in parentheses are in percentages

Majority of the elderly (80.75%) reported that they are not feeling neglected by family members or friends. Among the remaining nearly one fifth of the elderly (19.25%) feeling neglected by family members or friends.

It is clear from the above data there is slightly similar proportion of in rural and urban elderly of feeling neglected by rural and urban elderly.

A higher proportion of the female elderly (24.5%) were feeling neglected by family members or friends than the male elderly (14%). The reason being due to urbanization or unable to move from home due to household activities. While majority of the male elderly (86%) were not feeling neglected by children and friends as compared to female elderly (75.5%). In North India male are the head of the family and they usually connected with their friends even after their retirement.

It is evident from the data across districts, Mohali elderly (21%) largely reported of feeling neglected by their family members or friends when compared to Patiala elderly (17.5%). Mohali is adjacent to Chandigarh city, children may move in

search of job to metropolitan city. While a greater proportion of the Patiala elderly (82.5%) were not feeling neglected by family members or friends when compared to Mohali elderly (79%).

Gore (2000) points out that even if the elderly are cared for in the material sense, they may still feel that they are not as important in the family as in the traditional sense.

Isolation and Loneliness

The concept of social isolation implies a relative lack of participation in social relationships. Social relationships enable social contacts, interaction, communication and exchange of views, feelings, miseries, worries, attitudes etc. Isolation from the family the primary group and from the larger community brings loneliness and depression. Social contacts with friends, relatives and the extended family members are also a major activity. Women are more communicative and friendly by nature and they keep social contacts with others, where they meet for Bhajan, women's organisations, or temple attendance.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of respondents according to feeling lonely by elderly

S.No	Feeling Lonely	Distributions of Respondents						Total
		District Wise		Gender Wise		Region Wise		
		Patiala	Mohali	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	
1	Yes	95 (47.5)	143 (71.5)	80 (40)	158 (79)	90 (45)	148 (74)	238 (59.5)
2	No	105 (52.5)	57 (28.5)	120 (60)	42 (21)	110 (55)	52 (26)	162 (40.5)
Total		200	200	200	200	200	200	400

Figures in parentheses are in percentages

The above data reveals that greater than three-fifth (59.5%) of the elderly reported that they are feeling lonely. Reason may be children moves to cities in search of job. While less than two fifth (40.5%) of the elderly reported that they not are feeling lonely.

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The urban elderly (74%) largely reported that they are feeling lonely when compared to rural elderly (45%). In urban area the children remain busy in work because most of the jobs are private and they are not able to find time for the elderly.

Sometimes children move to big cities in search of jobs. Rural elderly (55%) largely reported they are not feeling lonely because most of the males in rural area do agricultural work and they are confined in their home.

The data further revealed that the female elderly (79%) would feeling lonely than male elderly (40%). The female elderly always confined in house and have small friend circle. A higher proportion of the male elderly (60%) were reported that they are not feeling lonely when compared to female elderly (21%). The male elderly were connected to the networking of friend circle and they join clubs and senior citizens associations.

Regarding districts, a higher proportion of the Mohali elderly (71.5%) were feeling lonely when compared to Patiala elderly (47.5%). In contrast a greater proportion of the Patiala elderly (52.5%) were not feeling lonely when compared to Mohali elderly (28.5%).

Gangrade(1988) have highlighted acute paucity of accommodation, exorbitant rents and migration of the young adults have prevented many elderly from living with their children, especially among the elderly women, leading to distress, loneliness.

Interest in Religious Activities

The significance of religious beliefs and practice can be seen both from the view point of the society and that of the individuals. The functionalists see religion as one of the important institutions for social integration and group solidarity. Religion is also considered as an important instrument for the individual's adjustment to various situations.

Table 5: Percentage distribution of respondents according to derivation of emotional support in stress

S.No	Derivation of emotional support in stress	Distributions of Respondents						Total N=400
		District Wise		Gender Wise		Region Wise		
		Patiala	Mohali	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	
1	From Religion	121 (60.5)	78 (39)	94 (47)	105 (52.5)	120 (60)	79 (39.5)	199 (49.75)
2	From hobbies	74 (37)	82 (41)	62 (31)	94 (47)	68 (34)	88 (44)	156 (39)
3	From Spouse	170 (85)	182 (91)	205 (102.5)	147 (73.5)	180 (90)	172 (86)	352 (88)
4	From Friends	145 (72.5)	123 (61.5)	149 (74.5)	119 (59.5)	120 (60)	148 (74)	268 (67)
5	Nothing particular	38 (19)	85 (42.5)	69 (34.5)	54 (27)	82 (41)	41 (20.5)	123 (30.75)
Total		200	200	200	200	200	200	400

Figures in parentheses are in percentages

The significance of religious beliefs and practice can be seen both from the view point of the society and that of the individuals. The functionalists see religion as one of the important institutions for social integration and group solidarity. Religion is also considered as an important instrument for the individual's adjustment to various situations.

The data revealed that greater than four-fifth (88%) of the elderly reported that they derived their emotional support in stress from spouse followed by from friends (67%), from religion (49.75) and from hobbies (39%). While the elderly who reported of nothing particular were (30.75%).

Across districts, the Patiala elderly (72.5%) largely reported that they derived their emotional support in stress from hobbies and from religion (60.5%) when compared to Mohali elderly (61.5%) and (39%) respectively. Mohali elderly largely reported they derived their emotional support in stress from spouse (91%).

It is observed that the female elderly (52.5%) largely reported that they derived their emotional support in stress from the religion and hobby (47%) when compared to male elderly (47%) and (31%) respectively. Almost in every house female performed religious functions and they remain busy in household activities. The male elderly largely reported they derived their emotional support in stress from spouse (102.5%) and from friends (74.5%).

Regarding region wise data the urban elderly (74%) largely reported that they derived their emotional support in stress from friends and from hobbies (44%) when compared to rural elderly (60%) and (34%). Rural elderly (90%) largely reported that they derived their emotional support in stress from spouse and from religion (60%) when compared to urban elderly (86%) and (39.5%) Most of the rural elderly always remain in their home

looking after their grandchildren and household.

Anantaraman(1979a) stresses that it was the individual's lifestyle that determined their happiness in later life. Also, the extent to which an individual adjusted to the loss of roles and created new ones, determined one's satisfaction with old age.

Findings

The data shows that the elderly rated their present condition of life as contented. The data revealed that the elderly were happy with the relations of their children and in-laws. As social norms and values are very rich most of the elderly did not felt neglected from their children. Isolation and loneliness is thought to be common problems of old age in Western countries. In Indian community the attachment to one's group, family and friends is persistently carried on by participation in social functions and ceremonies due to this the elderly did not felt of loneliness. Religious practice keeps oneself mentally and physically engaged in social acceptable activities. The elderly spent some of their free time in some kind of religious activity.

Implications

- The knowledge of aging and the development of positive attitudes

towards old age can contribute to the improvement of intergenerational relations. This can best be achieved by portraying the right image through media.

- There is a need to incorporate text on the importance of family as an integral unit to strengthen intergenerational relationships in text books at all levels.
- Identify factors that promote family cohesion and those that create conflict, and devise approaches and services that will strengthen the former and weaken the latter. Despite significant commonalities among families in a country or region, families are also different in vital ways. Cultural, ethnic, religious, and other variables define their intra-familial conflicts as well as provide directions for cohesion building factors.
- There is need to protect and strengthen the institution of the family and provide such support services as would enable the family to cope with its responsibilities of taking care of the elderly. Along with proper and effective professional welfare services that need to be evolved to provide

counseling services both to the elderly and their family members.

- Society could be more pro-family by facilitating public education on family values in order to promote intergenerational interaction between the young and elderly.
- Social welfare institutions should rope in the experienced elderly for sharing their skills and senior citizen groups can exercise their influence in policy and programmes issues which affect their lives and that of their families.
- Family closeness should be cultivated over the lifetime and men in particular, need to reinterpret their family role in old age and adopting an advisory role and so on.

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