

Socio-demographic attributes of the elderly :A gender perspective

M.S. BADIGER, R. KAMATH AND K.V. ASHALATHA

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in Dharwad district, Karnataka state during 2005-2008. A sample of 500 elderly was drawn from both urban and rural area, consisting both the genders. The research design was chiefly exploratory with three cohort age groups of 60-65, 66-70 and 71+. Interviews were conducted to study the functional ability as a result of aging. The interview schedule to guide the interview and to collect and record the data was developed and used during the interview. Frequency and percentages were computed for the classification of respondents. Socio-demographic profile of respondents by gender revealed that, majority of the female respondents were from 60-65 years age and, were illiterate. The employment status revealed that, housewives were of the major category.

KEY WORDS : Socio-demographic attributes, Elderly

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INTRODUCTION

Biologists explain that, there is a strong genetic basis for aging. In the body, the brain ages much slower than other organs which explains why some people continue to be intellectually active even after the body becomes frail (Ramamurthi, 2002). He also explained that, chronological age is the poor indicator of aging and there is heterogeneity in speed of ageing. Bagga (2002) opined that, the educational level of an individual plays an important role in how the aged deal with the changing scenario of their life and better economic resources may help to cope with it better. The financial security alone will not solve all the problems of elder care. If people have to continue to be part of the family system they should also make suitable adaptations to changing circumstances. The gender dimension in ageing and the related aspects are also of crucial importance. The disparity between gender among the elderly exists in all the societies. These studies indicate that gender perspective among the aged is rarely studied. Hence, it was felt to focus on the gender perspective of the elderly.

With the increase in number, the older population faces a number of problems and adjusts to them in varying degrees. These problems range from absence of ensured

and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependent to ill health, absence of social security, loss of social role and recognition and to the non-availability of opportunities for creative use of free time. The needs, problems and adjustment patterns of the elderly vary significantly according to their age, socio-economic status, health, living status and such other background characteristics. The health related quality of life of elderly, especially women, from rural areas, is considerably lower in India when compared to other countries. Poor nutrition, inadequate health care, socio-economic conditions and gender have been major factors explaining the ability of the elderly to maintain competence.

It is also noticed that, socio-economic and demographic variables influence the changes in functional abilities to a great extent. Hence, the elderly with various background differ in their functional ability. Assessing the socio-demographic levels of elderly would benefit the policy makers to design and modify the pension policies and retirement schemes.

METHODOLOGY

The elderly of Dharwad urban and rural area formed the sample. The rural sample was selected by locating

Correspondence to:

M.S. BADIGER, Department of Home Science, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, U.A.S. (R), RAICHUR (KARNATAKA) INDIA

Authors' affiliations:

R. KAMATH, Department of PG Studies and Research in Home Science, SNTD, Women's University, MUMBAI (M.S.) INDIA

K.V. ASHALATHA, Department of Agricultural Statistics, University of Agricultural Sciences, DHARWAD (KARNATAKA) INDIA