

# Family and Ageing: Problem Faced by Elderly Persons

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**Abstract:** Ageing signifies the psychological and psycho-social changes which are reflected in terms of general physical weakness. The objective of the paper was to study the socio-economic background of elderly persons and to describe the social, economic and psychological problems of the elderly people. For this study, the Mahendergarh district was selected which consists of 6 blocks and from these six blocks, one block was selected randomly i.e. Ateli and from Ateli block AteliNangal village was selected for our study purpose. For the collection of data, interview schedule related to social, psychological, economic dimensions of the elderly people was prepared. The study concluded that Ageing is now a day's considered as a major global social, economic, psychological and humanitarian issue. The attitude of the family members toward the old age peoples was changed. Old age persons felt loneliness and they revealed that they spent most of their time on playing cards, conversation with similar age persons, play with grandchildren etc.

**Key words:** Family, Ageing, Problems, Social security, Decision making.

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## Introduction

Family is the necessary and complete social association. The term family represents both an institution as well as association (**Pandey, 1994**). The family is divided into two categories- nuclear family and extended family. Extended family consists of two or more related nuclear families living together in the same place which consists of several generations living together in the same units (**Coleman and Gressay, 1986**). The elder's family members enjoyed undisputed authority and power. The aged person in the family gets special attention from the women, particularly from the daughter-in-law. The older persons have always been considered as the integral and essential member of the family in Indian society. In today's time, ageing is considered to be an emerging phenomenon in the Indian context as it the second most populous country in the world along with improved life expectancy. The reduction in fertility level has produced fundamental changes in the age structure of the population. In India, there are 100 million older persons and the number is growing to grow to 323 million by 2050, with life expectancy having increased from 40 year in 1951, 67.14 per cent per year male (66.08), female (68.33 year) in 2013, a person has 27 years more live than he would have 50 years back (**India Demographic Profile, 2013**). Due to the generation gap, the insecurity is felt among the older persons who change their lifestyles. Increase in lifespan also leads to chronic functional disabilities. So special care and need for assistance required by the older persons to manage their life as simple as the activities of daily living.

## Objective of the study:

- (1). To study the socio-economic background of elderly persons.
- (2). To delineates the social, economic and psychological problems of the elderly people.

## Review of related literature

**Nayer (2000)** in the study observed that the attitude, both general professional seems to be reason for the illness and was considered as an essential part of old age and most of the illness of the old age peoples have no cure but only palliatives.

**Siva (2002)** revealed that the different problems are faced by the elderly in our society. The main is the economic problem which occupies an important position. The reality of the Indian society is mass poverty and majority of the families have Income far below the level and inadequate source of income is a major problem of elderly in India.

**Satyanarayana (2002)** concluded that the problem of aging considered being very serious, because it leads to the destruction of social protection by the family network. The health status in care of male is more vulnerable than that of female.

**Rajan (2004)** conducted a study and concluded that majority of the elderly are underprivileged of the basic requirements and are thus in chronic poverty. The majority of the elderly people is dependent and even wanted to do work to earn a living.

**Pappathi et al. (2005)** conducted the study in rural Haryana and revealed that majority of landless rural aged were suffering from one or the other health problems and physical disabilities.

**Bhardwaj (2008)** has conducted a study on “Health and Ageing among Dhanka and Brahmin of Rajasthan” and analysed the level of literacy, socio-economic status, type of family, health problems, old age disease and psychological variations among two populations.

**Tyagi (2008)** in her study on “Socio-Health Dimensions of aged Population” founded that dietary habit of elderly staying in the old age homes were more regular as compared to old people living in family set up. The elderly staying within families were reported to be quite involved with the daily house-hold actives.

**Rao et al. (2013)** worked on the Health Status of the Rural Aged in Andhra Pradesh and analysed that health problems increases with advancing age and the problems arises due to neglect and poor economic status, deprivation and inappropriate intake of dietary. In the village, the lack of medical facilities and poor economic conditions might be responsible for the low health status of the villagers.

The above review of literature suggested that there are number of studies on the aged population in India, but there are some specific socio-cultural features of the population which can only be known while studying the particular society.

### Research Methodology and Data Collection

For this study, the Mahendergarh district was selected which consists of 6 blocks and from these six blocks, one block was selected randomly i.e Ateli and from Ateli block AteliNangal village was selected for our study purpose. The population of the AteliNangal is 2235 which consists of 700 men, 540 women, and 995 children’s. Village has 335 households. We have decided to take every third household from the list procured from the panchayat office. Every third household means around 118 households made our sample. Total 86 persons were interviewed which includes males and females of the household. From each household, the person interviewed is the eldest in the family. However, 32 households in our sample did not have any elder member in the family who full fill the condition of 60+ or they were sick and not in a position to participate in our interview process. Total 86 were interviewed (male and females) from different households.

For the collection of data, interview schedule related to social, psychological, economic dimensions of the elderly people was prepared. The interview schedule is one of the techniques of data collection. Face to face interview session would be preferred with our respondents as many of them are illiterate and not in a position to write because of their physiological problem of old age.

### Socio-Economic Background of Respondents

**Age:** Age is considered to be a important variable in the formation of attitudes of an individual. Age plays a significant role in behavioural patterns of aged persons.

Table-1  
**Age-wise distribution of the Respondents**

Age group (In Years)	No. of respondents	Percentage
60-69 years	44	51.17
70-79 years	20	23.25
80 Years and above	22	25.58
Total	86	100.00

The table- 1 reveals age wise distribution of the respondents. It shows that 44 respondents comprises of (51.17 per cent) belonged to the age group of 60-69 years, 20 respondents comprises of (23.25 per cent) belonged to the age group of 70-79 years and 22 respondents comprises of (25.58 per cent) belonged to the age group of 80 years and above. The majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 60-69 years.

**Sex:** In order to find out whether there is any difference between old man and woman in our sample in the matter of health the data were analysed in table 2.

Table-2  
**Sex-wise Distribution of the Respondent**

Sex-Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Man	49	56.98
Woman	37	43.02
Total	86	100.00

The table- 2 depicts sex-wise distribution of the respondents. It shows that 49 respondents which comprises of (56.98 per cent) were man and 37 respondents which comprises of (43.02 per cent) were woman. The majority of the respondents were man.

**Caste:** Indian society is divided in various caste categories where the status of an individual depends on the position in the caste hierarchy. A person's birth in a particular caste defines his/her other positions in the society.

Table-3  
**Caste-wise Distribution of the Respondents**

Caste-Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
Ahir	50	58.14
Chamar	19	22.09
Khati	11	12.79
Brahmin	06	6.98
Total	86	100.00

Table- 3 shows the caste-wise distribution of the respondents. It depicts that 50 respondents which constituted the (58.14 per cent) were from Ahir caste which falls in the backward caste category, 19 respondents comprises (22.09 per cent) were Chamar which falls in the scheduled caste category, 11 respondents which comprises of (12.79 per cent) were Khati (backward case) and only 6 respondents comprises of (6.98 per cent) were Brahmin. So majority of the respondents were from Ahir caste.

Table-4  
**Educational level of the Respondents**

Educational-Level	No. of respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	52	60.46
Up to primary level	11	12.79
Matric	13	15.12
Senior Secondary	07	8.14
Graduation and post-graduation	03	3.49
Total	86	100.00

Table- 4 discusses the educational level of the respondents. It depicts that 52 respondents comprises of (60.46 per cent) were illiterate, 11 respondents comprises of (12.79 per cent) were educated up to primary level, 13 respondents which consists of (15.12 per cent) were educated up to matric, 7 respondents having (8.14 per cent) were having education of senior secondary and only 3 respondents comprises of ( 3.49 per cent) respondents were having higher education. The majority of the respondents were illiterate.

Table-5  
**Occupation of the Respondents**

Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
Agriculture	39	45.35
Retired Govt. Servant	14	16.28
Petty Business	10	11.63
Manual labour	07	8.14
Other occupation	16	18.60
Total	86	100.00

Table -5 reveals the distribution of the respondents according to their past occupation. It shows that 39 respondents having (45.35 per cent) were previously engaged in agricultural activities, 14 respondents having (16.28 per cent) were retired government employees, 10 respondents having (11.63 per cent) were in petty business work, 7 respondents having (8.14 per cent) were in manual labour and 16 respondents having (18.60 per cent) respondents were in other occupation which includes looking after cattle's etc. Majority of the respondents were in agricultural activities.

### **Social Structure and Old Age**

The social structure of the family provides a cushion to the family. It is a strong backbone during the time of crisis. The Joint families are transforming in nuclear families and thus reducing the enough cushions for the support in the old age.

Table-6

**Consultation of Elders in Decision Making Process**

Decision Making	Issues of decision making					No. of Respondent	Percentage
	Marriage	House construction	Children education	Sale/ Purchase of property	Other		
Yes	39(45.35)	10(11.63)	07(8.14)	08(9.30)	3(3.49)	67	77.91
No	-	-	-	-	-	19	22.09
Total	-	-	-	-	-	86	100.00

The table-6 shows the 67 respondents comprise of (77.91 per cent) and they are always involved in decision making process as when any issues comes in the family whereas 19 respondents comprise of (22.09 per cent) and replied that they were never consulted in the decision making process by their children's. Further, the 67 respondents comprise of (77.91 per cent) who were consulted for decision making process whereas only 10 respondents comprise of (11.63 per cent) cases it is the construction of house the children ask their decision. Similarly, 7 respondents comprise of (8.14 per cent) and replied that their children also ask about the education matters and 8 respondents comprise of (9.30 per cent) replied that during the process of sale and purchase of property their decision is counted. The 19 respondents comprise of (22.09 per cent) were totally neglected by their family members in decision making process.

Table-7

**Change in Attitude of Family Members towards Old Persons**

Change in attitude	Reasons of Change				No. of respondents	Percentage
	Dislike	Apathy	Burden	Useless		
Yes	10(11.63)	16(18.60)	28(17.44)	09(10.46)	63	73.26
No	-	-	-	-	23	26.74
Total	-	-	-	-	86	100.00

As many as i.e. 63 respondents having (73.26 per cent) replied that they find the change in attitude of their family members towards them. Further, we asked about the reasons they for the change in the attitude, the majority of them i.e. 28 respondents having (17.44 per cent) felt that they feel older people are burden and therefore they do not care for them. 10 respondents having (11.63 per cent) felt that they dislike them, 16 respondents having (18.60 per cent) reported apathy of family members in the family, and 9 respondents having (10.46 per cent) reported that older people are useless in the family for them. However, 23 respondents having (26.74 per cent) do not find any change in the attitude of their family members towards them.

Table- 8

**Food Served to the Respondents**

Special food Served	Frequency of Serving		No. of respondents	Percentage
	Occasionally	Once in a week		
Yes	40(46.51)	28(32.56)	68	79.07
No	-	-	18	20.93
Total	-	-	86	100.00

When we asked to the respondents about the food served by the family members, majority of them i.e. 68 respondents which comprise of (79.07 per cent) reported that they are served special food, whereas remaining 18 respondents which comprised of (20.93 per cent) denied that they are never served any special food. Further, we asked about the frequency of serving food then 40 respondents which comprise of (46.51 per cent) replied that they are occasionally served special food, and 28 respondents having (32.56 per cent) mentioned that they are served once in a week.

Total-9  
**Serving of Food with Respect**

Food Served with respect	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	58	67.44
No	28	32.56
Total	86	100.00

The table- 9 shows that whether the food served to them is served with respect by the family members. The data analysed that 58 respondents having (67.44 per cent) respondents replied that they were served food with respect, whereas only 28 respondents having (32.56 per cent) respondents replied that they were not served food with respect.

### Psychological Support in the Family

Table-10  
**Family Members Thinking about the Old People**

Thinking of Family Members towards Old People	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Assets	24	27.91
Liability	28	32.56
Burden	23	26.74
No response	11	12.79
Total	86	100.00

The table- 10 revealed the various thinking pattern of family members towards the old people. It reported that the 28 respondents having (32.56 per cent) feel that they are liability in family, 24 respondents having (27.91 per cent) viewed old people as assets in the family and 23 respondents which comprise of (26.74 per cent) reported that they burden in the family. Majority of the respondents think that their family members treat them as liability.

Table-11  
**Frequency of Interaction with Friends**

Frequency of Interaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	39	45.35
Weekly	32	37.21
Monthly	15	17.44
Total	86	100.00

The table -11 shows that 39 respondents which comprise of (45.35 per cent) were having daily interaction with their friends, another 32 respondents which comprise of (37.21 per cent) were interacting on weekly basis and 15 respondents which comprise of (17.44 per cent) were only interacting in once in a month. Thus, majority of the respondents were able to interact daily with their friends.

Table-12  
**Spending of Time with Family Members**

Satisfaction Level	No of Respondents	Percentage
Completely satisfied	44	51.17
Partially satisfied	23	26.74
Not satisfied	21	24.42
Total	86	100.00

The table-12 analysed the level of satisfaction for the time spent with family members. The data pointed out that the 44 respondents having (51.17 per cent) were completely satisfied with the time spent with family members; whereas 23 respondents having (26.74 per cent) reported that they were only partially satisfied. Conversely, 21 respondents having (24.42 per cent) were not at all satisfied with the time spent with the family members as family members neglect them.

Table-13  
**Sharing of Happiness in the Family**

Share happiness	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	65	75.58
No	21	24.42
Total	86	100.00

The table- 13 reveals that 65 respondents having (75.58 per cent) agreed that their family members share matters of happiness in the family member, whereas only 21 respondents having (24.42 per cent) replied that their family members do not share any moments of happiness in the family.

### Economic Status

**Source of Income:** Traditionally economic status has been important determinant of the personality of an individual. In old age, one's income becomes reduced, due to his retirement, due to physical ailments; their reply in tabulated form is given.

Table-14  
**Source of income of the respondents**

Sources	No. of respondents	Percentage
Pension	86*	100.00
Bank interest from their Fix deposits	08	9.30
Monthly money is given by their son	09	10.47
Other sources (agriculture, rent etc.)	11	12.79
Total	86	100.00

\*all the respondents are getting some or other form of pension

The table-14 shows the source of income of respondents. The data depicted that the all the respondents are getting pension in some or other form. Besides that 8 respondents which comprise of (9.30 per cent) were earning bank interest from their fixed deposit, 9 respondents which comprise of (10.47 per cent) replied that they are regularly receiving money from their sons and 11 respondents which comprise of (12.79 per cent) respondent had other sources of income which includes income from house rent, agriculture etc.

**Pension Status:** In the present day society, economic conditions of a person play an important role in leading a satisfied life in old age. In old age people's maximum economic is derived from their pension.

Table-15  
**Type of Pension held by the Respondents**

Types of pension				No. of respondents	Percentage
Old age pension given by the government	Service retirement pension	Handicapped pension	Widow pension		
55(63.95)	14(16.28)	07(8.14)	10(11.63)	86	100.00

Table - 15 showed the pension status of respondents. It showed that the 55 respondents having (63.95 per cent) had old age pension given by the government, 14 respondents having (16.28 per cent) were receiving pension from the job which they served earlier, 7 respondents having (8.14 per cent) were receiving pension from handicapped heading, and remaining women i.e. 10 respondents which comprise of (13.95 per cent) were getting pension under the banner of their widowhood status.

Table-16  
**Economic Independence of Respondents**

Economically independent	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	37	43.02
No	49	56.98
Total	86	100.00

The table-16 analysed the economic independence of the respondents. However, all the respondents are deriving some or other form of pension but that is not sufficient to become economic independent. The results depicted that the 37 respondents which comprise of (43.02 per cent) were economically independent and 49 respondents which comprise of (56.98 per cent) were economically dependent on their family members. The study concluded that majority of the respondent were economically dependent.

Table-17  
**Spending of Income by the respondents**

Items for spending income	No. of respondents	Percentage
Eatables	15	17.44
Health	32	37.21
Spent for grandchildren items	22	25.58
Clothing	09	10.46
Miscellaneous	08	9.30
Total	86	100.00

The table -17 analysed the spending of income by the respondents. It showed that the 32 respondents having (37.21 per cent) spent their income on health, 22 respondents having (25.58 per cent) were spending their income for grandchildren, 15 respondents having (17.44 per cent) were spending their income on eatable items, 9 respondents having (10.46 per cent) spent their income on clothing and 8 respondents having (9.30 per cent) respondents spent their income on alcohol and bidi etc. However, majority of respondents were spending their income on health.

### Physical Mobility

In earlier period, the elderly people held a central honourable and authoritative position in the family, but present societies do not provide the same position. Older peoples are less physically mobile as compared to younger/adult people. Older people had to depend more depend on their family members as and when they are required to move. There can be different modes of transportation ranging from bicycle to motorcycle, car, public transportation etc. We asked our respondents about the vehicles they use for their transportation which provide them physical mobility.

Table-18  
**Type of Transportation Used by the Respondents**

Types of Vehicle				No. of respondents	Percentage
Bi-cycle	Two wheeler	Car	Public Transport (Bus/train)		
11(12.79)	08(9.30)	7 (8.14)	60 (69.77)	86	100.00

The table -18 showed the conveyance facilities used by the respondents for their physical mobility. The data depicted that the 11respondenst which comprise of (12.79 per cent) were still using bicycle to move here and there. 8 respondents which comprise of (9.30 per cent) were able to use two wheeler which includes scooter and motorcycles. Only 7 respondents which comprise of (8.14 per cent) were using car for their physical mobility. However, majority of them i.e. 60 respondents which comprise of (69.77 per cent) respondents are using public transport facilities which may be bus or train or tempos etc.

### Conclusion

Aging is now considered as a major global social, economic, psychological and humanitarian issue. Today it has gained social prominence. Ageing signifies the psychological and psycho-social changes which are reflected in terms of general physical weakness. The results of the study showed that the majority of the number of respondents was 50 which were from Ahir caste (58.14 per cent), 19 respondents were Chamar which comes in the category of scheduled caste (22.09 per cent), 11 respondents were Khati which comes in backward classes (12.79 per cent), 67 respondents said that they are always involved in decision making process in the family matter (77.91 per cent) whereas 19 respondents answered that they were never consulted in the decision making process by their children (22.09 per cent), 63 respondents replied that they find out the change in attitude of their family members towards them (73.26 per cent), 28 respondents felt that they feel older people are burden for the family members (17.44 per cent) and they do not want to do care for them, 10 respondents revealed that they dislike them (11.63 per cent) and 16 respondents conveyed the apathy of family members in the family (18.60 per cent). The study concluded that Ageing is now a days considered as a major global social, economic, psychological and humanitarian issue. The attitude of the family members toward the old age peoples was changed. Old age persons felt loneliness and they revealed that they spent most of their time on playing cards, conversation with similar age persons, play with grandchildren etc.

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