

CHAPTER-IV

PROBLEMS OF THE ELDERLY IN MAINTAINING FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATION IN OLD AGE

In our society, the utmost regard is paid to elderly citizens since time immemorial. Respect for elderly citizens is one of the central values of our society. This is reflected in our epics, Vedas, and numerous other writings where the elderly people acted as a model of character and cultural values and custodians of our society (*Karma & Jha, 2008*). The relation between young and old was harmonious in the past. The elderly were respected and comfortable due to the existence of value like non-materialistic approach, morality, and institutions like joint family, kinship, caste group, religion village panchayats, and the traditional ethos have made the younger to have unquestionable regards towards the elderly. Thus, a better relationship between the young and the old prompted greater life satisfaction among the elderly (*Sonar & Prasad, 2007*). The emotional and social support, physical security were insured due to the existence of a joint family, kinship, and value system. In the past agrarian society, grandparents used to play an important role in the socialization of the infant and children. The joint family system was predominant. The elderly section of the society used to enjoy unconditional respect and authority. The elderly enjoyed legitimized authority in the family as well as in the community. They had the decision making responsibilities in the economic, political, social, and religious activities of the family. The elderly were treated as repositories of experience and wisdom. Within the joint family system, there was a division of labour. The elderly had an important role to play which made their life meaningful.

The increasing processes of industrialization, modernization, urbanization have had a negative impact on traditional welfare institutions. The socio-cultural values have been subjected to change due to the forces of these processes. It has increased individualistic

value, vulgar materialism, and selfishness. The changes in the value system and institutional setup have had a negative impact on the status of the elderly people. The present industrial society has deprived the elderly of different roles. They had lost the opportunities for engaging themselves in various activities, enjoying higher status in the family and society, and social partition and association with various groups of people. Now, it is observed that many of the functions performed by the elderly in traditional joint families have been transformed into various other social institutions. For example, storytelling by grandparents used to be not only a recreation for grandchildren but also an important instrument of including manners and values among them (*Sonar & Prasad, 2007*).

The elderly in the present-day society has not received support from their family members as they used to get in the traditional society. They are left to their own capabilities to satisfy their socio-psychological needs. But due to several socio-economic and cultural forces, many of the elderly people cannot cope with the situation. In such a situation the elderly become victims of idleness, loneliness, boredom, and frustration.

An attempt is made in this chapter to study the status of the elderly women in the family and the community. This chapter focuses on the study of the factors concerned with the behavior and activities of elderly women. These factors include relationship and interaction with the family members living in the same household and children living separately, with friends and neighbors, relatives and members of voluntary organization, involvement in occupational activities, and social interaction. An attempt is also made to find out if any change is taking place in role-playing by the female elderly in rural society.

4.1: Familial and Social problems of Elderly women:

In this section of the chapter, an attempt is made to study the female elderly in family and community settings. Their problems may vary in nature according to social settings.

4.1. A: Relationship with the Family Members Living in the Same House:

Family is the most important primary group. It is the basic unit of society. It has a special significance for elderly people. Social living becomes possible only due to the existence of social relationships. Among the different social relationships, family relation is the most crucial one. It helps in the formation of the personality development of an individual. Family is the place where the most frequent forms of interaction take place. A high frequency of interaction in the family is important from the perspectives of the elderly. In the absence of interaction with family members, the elderly is subjected to the isolation problem.

**Table-4.1.A:
Relationship with Family Members and Respondents**

Sl. No.	Relationship with family members	Respondent
1	Unsatisfactory	33(16.5%)
2	Satisfactory	135(67.5%)
3	very satisfactory	32(16%)
Total		200(100%)

Table-4.1.A: data reveals that out of the total 200 respondents 67.5% had stated about their satisfactory relationship with their family members and 16.5% of the respondent had stated about their unsatisfactory relationship.

4.2: Frequency of Conflicts with the Family Members:

To find out the quality of relationships of the elderly with the family members, it is necessary to find out their frequency of conflict with them. The respondents have been asked to mention the frequency of their conflicts, as quite often, sometimes, or rarely.

Table-4.2:**Conflict with Family Members and Respondents'**

Sl. No	Conflict with family members	Respondent
1	quite often	37 (18.5%)
2	Sometimes	53(26.5%)
3	Rarely	110 (55%)
Total		200 (100%)

Table - 4.2:, data depicts that the majority (55.0%) of the respondents had stated that they 'rarely' involved in a conflict with their family members. 26.5% of the respondents had stated that they were 'sometimes' involved in a conflict with the family members and 18.5% of the respondents had stated about 'quite often' conflict with their family members.

4.3: Main Reasons for Conflict:

After asking to mention the frequency of their conflicts with the family members living with them respondents were asked about the reasons for conflicts.

Table-4.3:
Main reasons for Conflict and Respondent

Sl. No.	Main Reasons for conflict	Respondent
1	poor economic condition	94(47%)
2	difference of opinion	44 (22%)
3	Indiscipline	40 (20%)
4	Miscellaneous	22 (11%)
Total		200(100%)

Data in Table-4.3: reveal that 47.0% of the respondents had started about the poor economic condition as the main reason for conflicting with the family members; 22.0% of the respondents had stated that 'difference of opinion' was the main reason for conflict. 20.0% had sated about 'indiscipline' and 11.0% had stated about 'miscellaneous reasons'.

4.4: Interaction with the Family Members Living in the Same House:

For good adjustment in old age, it is necessary to have a face to face interaction with the family members. Interaction with the family members mainly shows the quality of the relationship with them. Keeping in view this fact, the respondents were asked about how much time on average they spend face to face interaction with the family members.

Table-4.4:
Face to Face Interaction with Family Members and Respondents

Sl. No.	Face to face interaction with family members	Respondents
1	a quarter of the day	69(34.5%)
2	half of the day	57 (28.5%)
3	most of the day	74(37%)
Total		200 (100%)

Table - 4.4: reveals that 37.0% of the respondents had stated that they had a face to face interaction with the family members 'most of the day', 28.5% of them had stated about 'half of the day' and 34.5% of them had stated about 'quarter of the day'.

4.5: Attitudes of the Family Members living with:

The respondents were asked about the attitude of the family members living with them. The respondents have been asked to mention the attitude of the family members as 'respectful', 'normal', and 'non-cordial'.

Table-4.5:
The attitude of the Family Members living with and Respondents

Sl. No.	The attitude of the family member	Respondent
1	Respectful	100 (50%)
2	Normal	77(38.5%)
3	non-cordial	23(11.5%)
Total		200(100%)

Table- 4.5: reveals that 50.0% of the respondents had stated about the 'respectful' attitude of the family members living with them and 38.5% of the respondents had stated about the 'normal' attitude of the family members. Again, 11.5% of the respondents had advocated about the 'non-cordial attitude' of the family members.

4.6: Respondents' Opinion about the Attitude of the Family Members:

Respondents were further probed to uncover their opinion regarding the attitude of the family members towards them as they gradually becoming old. It is assumed that the aging process affects relationships qualitatively. Table- 4.6: presents the reported quality of the relationship between the respondents and the family members who are closely involved with the respondents in the interactional process. The respondents were required to categorize responses in terms of 'respectful', 'normal', and 'non-cordial'. Respondents

extending from 132 to 196 of the total sample cases responded to the questions (Table-4.6 :).

Table-4.6:
Respondents' Opinion about the Attitude of the Family Members

Sl. No	Family members	Respondent			Total
		respectful	Normal	non-cordial	
1	Son/daughter/s	100	73	23	N=196
		(51.02%)	(37.24)%	(11.73)%	100%
2	Daughter/s-in-law	72	31	53	N=156
		(46.15%)	(19.87)%	(33.97)%	100%
3	Spouse	95	39	9	N=143
		(66.43%)	(27.27)%	(6.29)%	100%
4	Grandchild/younger	70	45	15	N=130
		(53.84%)	(34.61)%	(11.53)%	100.0%

Data in the Table-4.6: reveals that 51.01% of the respondents had stated about the 'respectful attitude' of their sons/daughters; 37.23% of the respondents had stated about 'normal attitude' of their sons/daughters, and 11.73% of the respondents had stated about the 'non-cordial' attitude of their family members.

46.14% of the respondents had stated about the respectful attitude of their daughter/s-in-laws. 19.87% of the respondents stated that daughter/s-in-laws had shown a normal attitude towards them. 33.96% of the respondents had stated that daughter/s-in laws had a non-cordial relationship with them.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 66.43% had maintained the 'respectful attitudes' of their spouses. 27.26% of the respondents had stated about the normal attitude of their spouses. Only 6.28% of the respondents had mentioned the non-cordial attitude of their spouses. Data reveals that the majority of the respondents i.e. 53.83% had stated about the 'respectful attitudes' of their grandchild have towards them. Only 11.53% of the respondents had stated about the 'non-cordial attitude' of their grandchild.

4.7: Children Living Separately:

Table-4.7:

Children Living Separately from Home

Sl. No.	Children staying away from home	Respondent
1	No	86
		43.0%
2	Yes	114
		57.0%
Total		200
		100%

Table -4.7: reveals that 57.0% of the respondents stated that their children were staying away from home.

4.8: Frequency of Meetings with the Children Staying Away:

The respondents who had stated that their children were staying away from home, they were asked about the frequency of meetings with them.

**Table-4.8:
Duration of Staying Away and Respondents'**

Sl. no.	Duration of staying away	Total
1	less than once in a year	24
		21.8%
2	once in a year	9
		8.2%
3	more than once in a year	77
		70.0%
Total		110
		100 %

Children staying away from home- 114

4 No. of respondents had given no response.

Table-4.8: reveals that the majority of the respondents (70.0%) had stated that their children visited them more than once a year. 21.8% of the respondents had stated about the frequency of visit 'less than once in a year'.

4.9: Interaction and Relationship with the Children Living Separately:

The relationship of old people with their children living separately is also very important. The children may live separately due to some compulsion, but, if their relationship with

the parents is good they can solve the problems of their parents and keep them happy. To find out the respondents' relationship with the children living separately, they were asked to evaluate their relationship as 'unsatisfactory', 'satisfactory', and 'very satisfactory'.

Table-4.9:

Relation with the Children Staying Away

Sl. No.	Relation	Respondent
1	Unsatisfactory	33
		28.94%
2	Satisfactory	70
		61.40%
3	very satisfactory	11
		9.6%
Total		114
		100.0%

The respondents who had stated that their children were staying away from home, were asked about their relationship with the abroad children. Table no 4.9: reveals that 61.40% of the respondents had a 'satisfactory' relationship with their abroad children. 28.94% of the respondents had stated about 'unsatisfactory' relationship where males, only 9.64% of respondents had stated about their 'very satisfactory' relationship with the children living separately.

4.10: Feeling of Loneliness in the Family:**Table-4.10:****Feeling of loneliness in the family and Respondents**

Sl. No.	Feel loneliness	Respondent
1	No	117
		58.5%
2	Yes	83
		41.5%
Total		200
		100 %

One of the major problems the elderly have to face in old age is loneliness. 41.5% of the respondents had a loneliness problem [Table -4.10:].

4.11: Respondents' Perception of Status in the Family:

An attempt was made to investigate from the respondents whether they perceive deterioration or improvement of status in the family with the increase in their age. It is generally believed that after the age of 60 due to changes in the roles primarily in the areas of occupation and economic activity, the perception of the individual about his own status undergoes a change. It ultimately leads to changes in the pattern of personal relationships within the family. On account of certain important losses in-role behavior, considerable changes in the perception of 'self' take place. Keeping in view this fact, the elderly were asked whether their family members have given 'the same weightage' to their opinion about different matters with their increasing age.

Table-4.11:

Same Weightage to the Opinion at old age

Sl. No.	Same weightage	Respondent
1	No	42
		21.0%
2	Yes	158
		79.0%
Total		200
		100.0%

It was surprising to note that despite their problems in the family relation, most of the elderly (79.0%) maintained that the ‘weightage’ due to their age remained unchanged. Nevertheless, 21.0% of the elderly had stated that their opinion had lost weightage with the increase in their age.

The information emphatically supports that the weightage of the opinion of the majority of the sample population continued to be the same. It can therefore be said that the status of the majority of the aged remains unchanged.

4.12 Participation of the Elderly in Household) activity:

It is a commonly held belief that with the advancing age the participation in household activities gradually decreases. The process of disengaging oneself starts with household activities.

Table-4.12:

Busy with Household Activity in Old age

Sl. No.	Respondents' view	Total
1	no	44
		22.0%
2	yes	156
		78.0%
Total		200
		100%

The figures in Table -4.12: indicates that the majority of the respondents (78.0%) were busy with the household activities

4.13: Respondents' Interest in Decision making of Family Affairs:

Table-4.13:

Disinterestedness in Decision-making in Family matter

Sl. No.	Respondents' view	Total
1	no	97
		48.5%
2	yes	103
		51.5%
Total		200
		100 %

It is generally observed that with an increase in age, the elderly becomes disinterested in family affairs. The figures in table no-4.13: reveal that 51.0% of the respondents were disinterested in the decision making of the family affairs.

4.14: Exercise of Authority in Regards to Different Family Matters:

Table – 4.14: shows the exercise of authority by the aged over some of the family matters. The responses were classified into three categories-‘high’, ‘low’, ‘no- authority’.

Table - 4.14:**Exercise of authority in the family by the elderly**

Sl. No.	Family matters	Respondent			Total
		High	Low	No authority	
1	Education of child	80	60	60	N=200
		40%	30%	30%	100%
2	Marriage of dependents	120	60	20	N=200
		60%	30%	10%	100%
3	Festivals and ceremonies in the family	60	90	50	N=200
		30%	45%	25%	100%
4	Authority over property	110	70	20	N=200
		55%	35%	10%	100.0%
5	Day to day family affairs	90	72	28	N=200
		45%	39%	16%	100%

The figures in Table - 4.14: depict data regarding this matter. The table indicates that regarding 'marriage of the dependents' 60.0% of the respondents had 'high authority' as against 10.0% of the respondents had no authority to make a decision. 30.0% of the respondents had very 'low authority' regarding the marriage of the dependents. Regarding

the education of the respondents 40.0% of the respondent had enjoyed high authority; 30.0% of the respondents had low authority and 30.0% had no say regarding the education of their child. In the case of festivals and ceremonies in the family, 30.0% of the respondents had started their 'high' authority as against 45.0% and 25.0% had low and no authority respectively regarding the matter. The majority of the respondents i.e. 55.0 % had stated about their control over the property as against 10% had no authority over their property. In day to day affairs in the family, 45.0% had enjoyed high authority. Thus the result in the rural setting indicates that regarding the exercise of authority in the case of all the family matters a good number of women had enjoyed a respectful position.

4.15: Membership in Voluntary Organization:

One's engagement with the voluntary organization in old age is helpful for keeping oneself free from isolation problems.

Table - 4.15:

Membership in Voluntary Organization

Sl. No.	Respondents' view	Respondent
1	No	155
		77.5%
2	Yes	45
		22.5%
Total		200
		100%

The figure in Table -4.15: reflects the membership of the respondents in a voluntary organization. The majority of the respondents i.e. 77.5%, had stated that they were not associated with any voluntary organization.

4.16: The Attitude of the Elderly towards Activities of the New Generation:

An attempt was made to know the attitude of the elderly towards the activities of the new generation. Due to the generational gap, conflicting opinions are the by-product of misunderstanding between the young and the old. Much of the kinds of literature in the socio-psychological discipline are available regarding differences of opinion between the younger and older generation.

**Table - 4.16:
Unhappy with the Activities of the New Generation**

Sl. No.	Respondents' view	Total
1	No	77
		38.5%
2	Yes	123
		61.5%
Total		200
		100 %

Table 4.16: the figures indicate that majority of the respondents i.e. 61.5% were unhappy with the activities of the new generation as against 38.5% of the respondents who were happy with the activities of the new generation with certain exceptions.

4.17: Mutual Visit to Neighbors/Friends/Relatives:

To examine the relationship between the interactions with friends, neighbors, relatives' respondents were asked about their mutual visit to them.

Table - 4.17:

Mutual Visit to Neighbor/Friends/Relatives

Sl. No.	Respondents' view	Respondent
1	quite often	100
		50.0%
2	Sometimes	81
		40.5%
3	rarely	19
		9.5%
Total		200
		100%

The following table shows that 50.0% of the respondents had advocated about 'quite often' visits to their neighbors/friends/relatives. Only 9.5% had stated about 'rarely' visit their neighbors/friends/relatives.

4.18: Happy with the Family Life:

Table - 4.18:

Happy with the Family Life and Respondent

Sl. No.	Respondents' view	Total
1	no	76
		38.0%
2	yes	124
		62.0%
Total		200
		100 %

It is interesting to note that in spite of so many problems in their family life, in the old age majority of the respondents had maintained that they were living a happy life in old age.

62.0% of the respondents had stated that they are happy with their family members as against 38.0% showed that they were not happy.

4.19: Religious Belief of the Elderly:

The data from the field depicts that the respondent's attitude towards religious belief. The respondents were asked four questions to find out how strongly they believe in the existence of 'gods and goddesses' and the concept of '*Punya*' (grace) and '*papa*' (sin), *karma* and rebirth, and hell and heaven. The majority had shown their strong belief in gods and goddesses and *Punya* and *pap*. But regarding *karma* and rebirth and about the belief in hell and heaven most of the aged were not interested.

4.20: Association with Religious Institution and Mental Satisfaction:

The data from the field depicts that regarding the respondents' association with a religious institution and mental satisfaction. A higher percentage of the elderly 72.0% had stated about their mental satisfaction due to their association with religious institutions. A good number of respondents had stated about their mental satisfaction due to the association with religious institutions. However, a significant percentage had stated that association with religious institutions did not provide them any mental satisfaction. A few percentages of the respondents were not in a position to say whether their associations with religious institutions provide them mental satisfaction or not.

4.21: Major findings:

Majority of the respondents 67.5% had stated about the satisfactory relationship with the family members with whom they are living. The majority of the elderly women i.e. 55.0% had mentioned their rare involvement in a conflicting situation with the other family members. Indeed, a considerable number of elderly i.e. 18.5% had stated about 'quite often' conflict with the family members. A significant percentage of elderly i.e., 47.0%

had stated about the poor economic condition as the main reason for conflict wherein difference in opinion also constitutes a good percentage.

Regarding face to face interaction with the family members, the study reveals that a good number of elderly spends longer time in face to face interaction in comparison to the urban elderly. The majority of the elderly had received a respectful attitude from their sons/daughters, spouses, and grandchild. Though not the majority, a significant no. of elderly (46.14%) had mentioned the respectful attitude of their daughter/s- in- law.

Regarding children staying away from home, the majority of the elderly (61.40%) had mentioned about the satisfactory visits of their children staying away from home.

Interestingly, a significant percentage of elderly women (41.5%) had to face the loneliness problem in the family in spite of their social closeness in rural society. The Majority i.e. 79.0%, of the respondents, had stated about the lost weightage of their opinion in the family matters with the increase of their age.

When the respondents were asked about their participation in household activities the majority of the respondents had positively responded. A higher percentage of the elderly (51.5%) were disinterested in the family affairs since their opinions were not given importance or ignored by their family members. Regarding the authority over the family members in different matters, a significant number of respondents stated about their lost status or deterioration in their authority. Association with VOs can help one's to escape from loneliness in old age but only a few elderly women have their active engagement in such voluntary activities. The majority of the respondents had stated that they were not associated with any voluntary organization. 61.5% of the elderly women had mentioned their unhappiness with the activities of the new generation and for the same, they had a kind of social distance from the new generation that placed them in an unpleasant situation. However, elderly women in the villages able to maintain a good relationship

with their friends/neighbors/ and relatives because they are able to maintain frequent visits to them. Their association with the 'satras' and 'namghar' helps them from escaping boredom and loneliness in available leisure time.

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