

Perception of elderly: Expectations and Reality

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Abstract

The perception of the elderly for their family members regarding their care is very positive at the middle age of life. The expectations are high. But the realities are different. Everyone expect to live life with the family. But due to many socio economic situations and deteriorating values in the society, the elderly people are not care of properly. They are the puppets of circumstances. In the Indian society, there is normally high regards for the elderly parents. But the growing commercialization and materialism, the ambitions and expectations are increasing. In the race of earning money, the care of the elderly is the least in the list of priorities. This paper studies the perception of the elderly for their family members regarding their care in the old age. The study is based on the primary field survey in the Rajasthan state in India. This study emphasizes the need of the future planning for the better and happy old age.

Keywords: elderly, perception, care, crime

Introduction

Human being is the victim of expectations. These expectations are often higher than the realities. There are so many dreams for the life. Every effort of the human being is dedicated to make the future bright. In the years of the productive life, the targets are set for the old age.

It is the mindset of the Indian patriarchal society that in the old age they would live with their children. They expect that their children will support them at their best and they would fulfill not only their basic needs but also give the care they have given to their children in their childhood. But it is seen that the elderly are not taken care of properly. They have to live a measurable life. In the Indian society that people do not plan their old age as in the western society. They expect their family to take care of them. They are fully dependent on their younger generation. But the younger generation is too busy in earning livelihood and has so much of ambitions and aspiration that they hardly have any time to spare for their elderly. Most of the elderly expect that the same behavior from their children after their marriage also. But due to one or another reason, when their children do not care for the elderly, the elderly feel sorrow, loneliness and frustration.

Moreover, the elderly face many problem in the old age like the changing of the ownership of their property, forceful separation from the family, lack of suitable accommodation, dishonor and disrespect and harm to dignity of life.

India is the country where the problems of the elderly are still not fully identified in compare to western countries. Here the phenomenon of the old age will grow. As the attitude and behavior pattern of younger generation is changing and they are getting busy in their own stuff, it is very difficult to expect from them to take care of their elderly. So it is necessary to study the perception of the elderly for the formulation of proper policy regarding them.

Perception or the manner in which one perceives one's own position is an important component in the social, psychological and even mental well being of the elderly. Often it is seen that even in well off houses, the perception of well being are found missing which is the prime reason for an unhappy life and cannot be specified as something close to being satisfied or taken well care of.

Objective

The main objective of this paper is to identify the expectation of the elderly from their family members regarding the support they want in the old age. It also identifies the perception regarding the crime against the elderly.

Data base and research methodology

The present paper is based on the empirical study of the elderly in the Rajasthan. The survey regarding this was undertaken in the year 2013-14. Total 600 samples were collected from all strata of the society i.e. place of residence, sex and castes. For the sample collection, schedule was prepared to identify the perception of elderly regarding their support system and socio- economic condition. Random stratified systematic sampling method is used for collecting samples. In this paper, the data regarding the perception of elderly is considered to study elderly problem empirically. It is descriptive in nature and based on both primary and secondary sources. The literature related to elderly is consulted to understand the problem. It consists of documents, newspapers, articles, journals, dissertation and thesis on elderly persons. The secondary data is taken from the Census of India.

Result and discussion

The patriarchal attitude and son preference is a reality of Indian society. It is clearly reflective in the preferences of

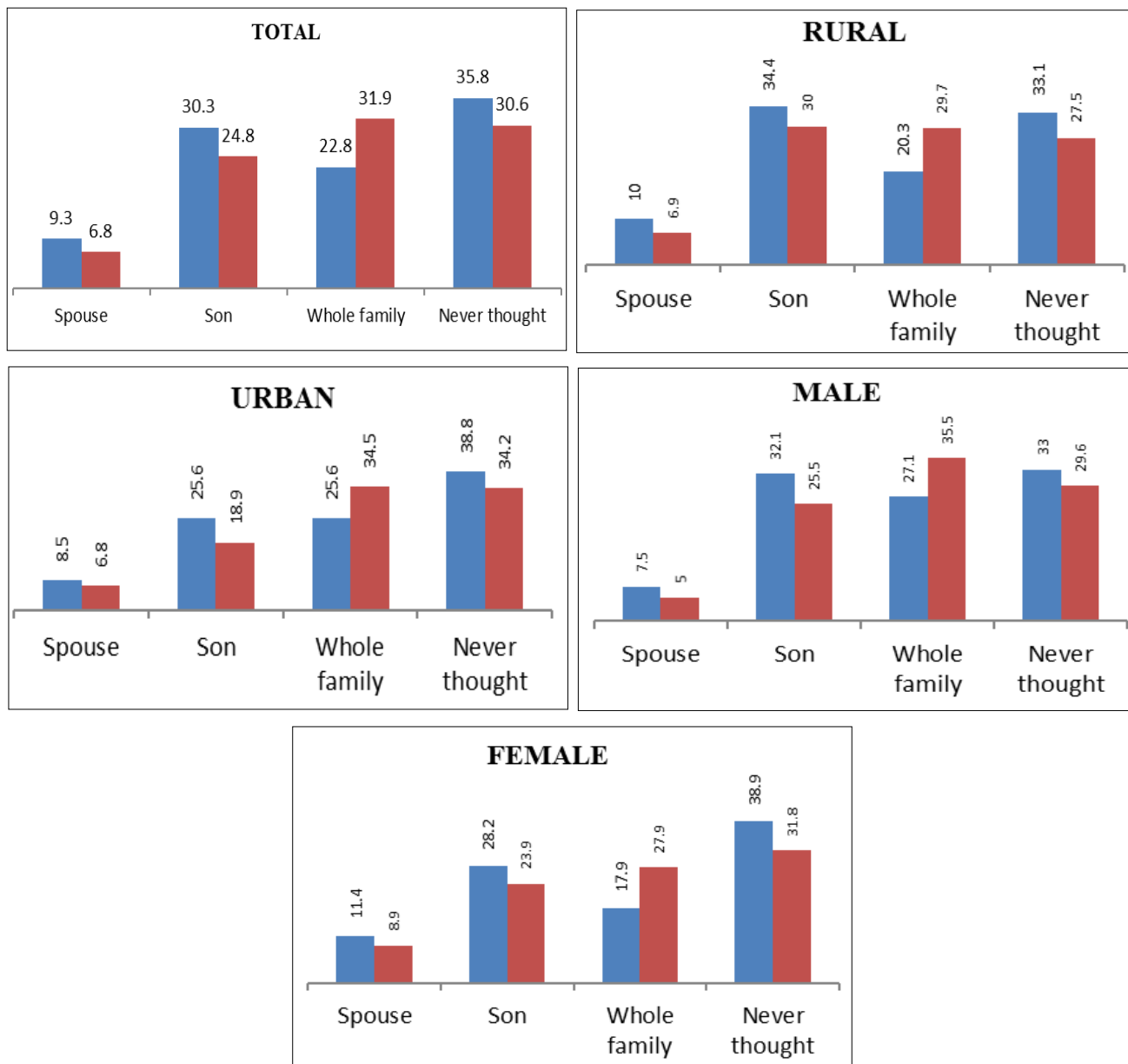
elderly population. It is observed during the field study that people want to stay with their sons in the old age. In the study of the perception of elderly it is found that at the age of 40 years around 23 to 35 percent had expectation to live with their own sons. After this the family is given the preference. It is observed that 22.8 percent of the elderly expected to live with the whole family in their old age. While it is also a fact that more than one third of the elderly did not make any plan for their future stay even at the age of 40 years. On the other hand, at the age of 60 years, the son preference declines and the preference of whole family increase. At this age, elderly begins to think about their stay preference in the future. In the urban area (38.8%), the proportion of the people who never thought about their stay in old age is more than the rural areas (33.1%). The son preference is more prevalent in rural areas (34.4%) than in urban areas (25.6%) which remain

unchanged at the age of 60 also. While the choice of living with whole family increase (from 20.3 to 29.7 percent) in rural areas as well as in urban areas (from 25.6 to 34.5%) between the ages of 40 to 60 years.

Son preference and living with the whole family is higher choice of the male elderly (32.1%, 27.1% respectively) than female elderly (28.2%, 17.9% respectively) at the age of 40 years. The choice of the whole family increases at the age 60 years. More or less the same situation prevails in the age of 60 years with slight change.

At the age of 40, the choice of females to live alone is almost negligible. It reflects the social structure of the society also. Female feels more vulnerable than to her male counterparts.

Perception of elderly about choice to live with at the age of 40 years and 60 years



Source: Primary Survey of Elderly, Rajasthan
Value are the percentage of the households surveyed

■ Perception at age 40 years ■ Perception at age 60 years

Fig 1

Thus it is evident that the choices to live with at the age of 60 near about follow the same trend as those at 40's with a slight decline in son preferences and consequently a slight increment in the whole family category and living alone category which may probably be an outcome of the son getting too engrossed into their own lives or worse even dejecting the elderly of the house who out of remorse prefer bearing the plight of loneliness in this age.

The perception of the elderly towards their son after their marriage shows a drastic negative attitude. Before marriage around 99 percent children want to stay with elderly parents but after marriage this figure comes down to only 30 percent which depicts that a higher sense of insecurity of son's marriage exists among the aging population.

Perception of elderly about children's behaviour before marriage and after marriage

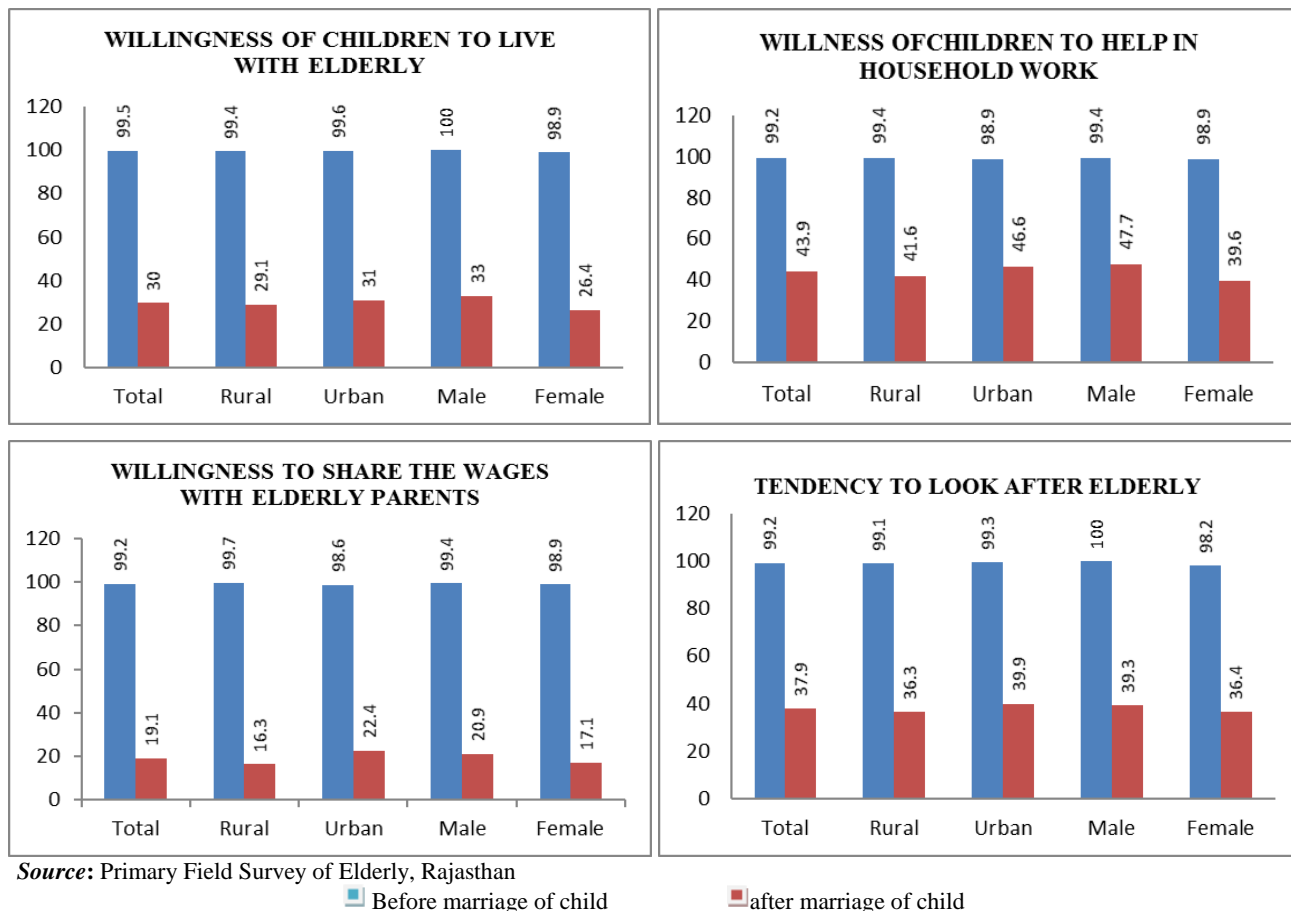


Fig 2

The perception of the elderly about sharing of wages by their children is that before marriage around 90 percent want to share their earnings but it declines to mere around 20 percent after getting married. Surprisingly, the urban people willing to share income post marriage are higher than their rural counterparts. Though the economic scenario paints a grim picture about the pre and post marriage perception of the elderly, the well being of the older people in terms of younger ones helping them in the household and looking after the sick elderly come down from 99.2 percent to 43.9 percent and 99.2 percent to 37.9 percent respectively.

According to caste, it is observed that a similar picture of decline in scenario of pre and post marriages is visible in following table (table no 1). Younger generation is less willing to live with elderly and to share of income with elderly across the castes. Moreover, such decline tends to aggravate from general caste to OBC, SC and ST respectively. This decline can probably be explained with the economic and social status of the castes. The willingness to share wages is low among ST because they stand at the last in terms of the incomes earned and share in economic hierarchy of the society.

Table 1: Perception of elderly about young generation before marriage and after marriage

	CASTE	GEN		OBC		SC		ST	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Is young generation willing to live with elderly parents	Before Marriage	100	0.0	99.0	1.0	99.2	0.8	100	0.0
	After Marriage	37.1	62.9	29.7	70.3	29.3	70.7	21.8	78.2
Is earning children share wage with their old parents	Before Marriage	98.7	1.3	98.5	1.5	100	0.0	100	0.0
	After Marriage	23.3	76.7	19.0	81.0	19.5	80.5	13.7	86.3

Is young generation help in household work	Before Marriage	98.1	1.9	99.0	1.0	100	0.0	100	0.0
	After Marriage	45.3	54.7	43.1	56.9	48.8	51.2	38.7	61.3
Is young generation look after parents when they are sick	Before Marriage	99.4	0.6	97.9	2.1	100	0.0	100	0.0
	After Marriage	41.5	58.5	33.8	66.2	43.1	56.9	34.7	65.3

Source: Primary Field Survey of Elderly, Rajasthan

The younger ones taking care of their elderly before and after marriage (shown as Before marriage : After marriage) is analyzed and observed that the scheduled caste is showing the highest tendency of taking care of their older generations (100:43.1) and helping them in household work (100:48.8). Therefore, it is seen that though economically the scheduled caste and tribe elderly may not find a favorable stand as compared to their counterparts in other castes but emotionally they are well cared off.

As far as the support from the children is concerned, it is observed that most of the elderly responded in the favour of their children. In the survey households, 85.7 percent of the elderly have major support from their children. In the rural areas, the children’s support is lower than urban. Same is true for female elderly also. In OBC caste, lesser elderly thought that the children are the major support in the old age. In the rural area, support is low as children migrate to other place so elderly are self reliant. Female elderly consider their spouse as major support rather than children.

Perception of elderly about children who are major support in old age

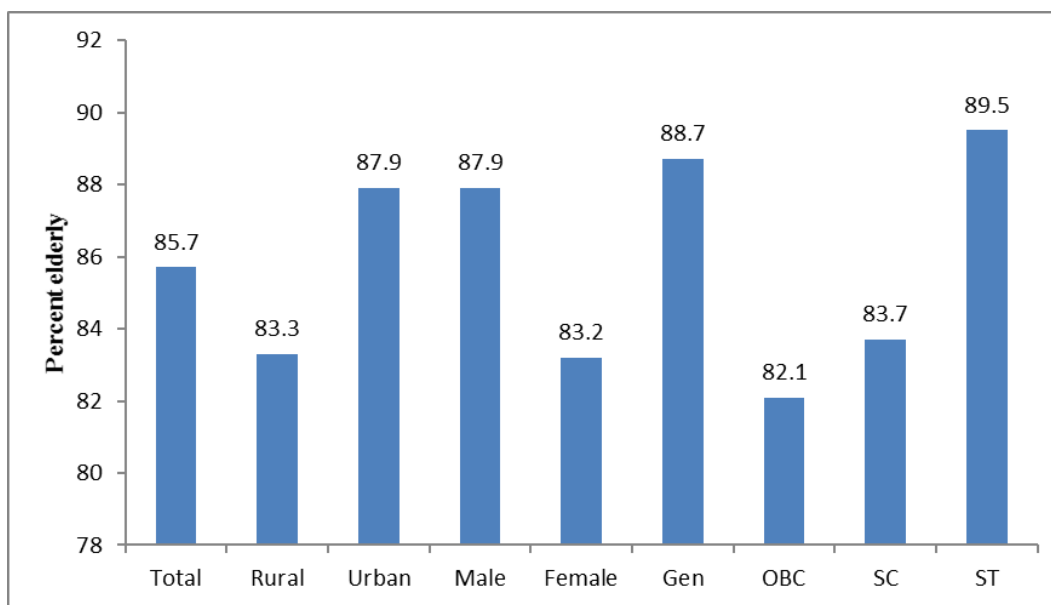


Fig 3

The patriarchal nature of the society and the son preference is reflective in the perception of the elderly when being questioned about who they think should take care of them. According to 67.2 percent elderly, son should take care of them and around 25 to 30 want it to be both son and

daughter. In STs the son preference is the highest (73.4%) and followed by scheduled caste (73.2%). In OBC caste, the son preference is the lowest. They prefer both son and daughter as their support in the old age. Same is true for the rural areas in comparison to urban areas.

Table 2: Elderly perception: responsible person for taking care of elderly

Care Taker	Total	Rural	Urban	Male	Female	Gen	OBC	SC	ST
Son	67.2	62.8	72.2	68.2	66.1	67.3	59.5	73.2	73.4
Daughter	4.3	3.4	5.3	4.4	4.3	7.5	3.1	2.4	4.0
Both (son and daughter)	24.3	28.8	19.2	23.7	25.0	22.6	31.3	21.1	18.5
Themselves	4.2	5.0	3.2	3.7	4.6	2.5	6.2	3.3	4.0

Source: primary field survey of elderly, Rajasthan

Elderly are also prone to the various kind of threat from the family members as well as society. In this respect, the perception of elderly is based on information from newspaper, radio, TV etc. When elderly were asked about the news, which they come across by radio, Television or news paper and other sources about crimes against elderly, then

elderly responded that they frequently listened about changing of ownership by force (around30%). The second most is murder of elderly just for the sack of wealth. Nevertheless, around 40 percent of elderly are unaware of such crimes.

Table 3: News of crime against elderly

Types of crimes	Total	Rural	Urban	Male	Female	Gen	OBC	SC	ST
Change of ownership by threatening	28.5	30.9	25.6	32.7	23.6	24.5	36.4	34.1	15.3
To separate from home	11.3	10.6	12.1	13.4	8.9	12.6	11.3	13.0	8.1
Keep in house but with low level of life	5.3	3.8	7.1	5.0	5.7	4.4	4.6	12.2	0.8
Murder for Wealth	15.1	14.4	16.0	15.3	15.0	26.4	15.9	10.6	4.0
Other	0.7	0.9	0.4	0.6	0.7	1.3	1.0	0.0	0.0
Do not know	39.1	39.4	38.8	33.0	46.1	30.8	30.8	30.1	71.8

Source: primary field survey of elderly, Rajasthan

One more interesting observation is that in urban areas, change of property ownership and disrespect of the elderly within house is higher but the murders for the property take place at a higher rate in rural regions owing to their lack of knowledge of laws and poor literacy levels.

Conclusion

From the whole discussion here, it can be concluded that by the age of 40 years, most of the people are not anxious for their old age. With the successive years, they begin to think in this direction. It is common that they have very positive perception for their family members. They think that they will be taken care of properly. They have a higher degree of belief in their children. But the reality is different. There is a drastic change in perception at two different stages of the life. Before the marriage of their children, they are very positive but after the marriage, they encounter different situation. In the surveyed area, elderly are not so aware about their future. They are totally dependent on the circumstances. Sometime circumstances may be good. Sometime they may be bad. The tendency to live with son is higher in the age of 40 years which changes by the age of 60 years. Now living with whole family is preferred. Experience of the elderly is that before marriage, their children, are more willing to live with parents, ready to share wages and more supportive to take care in the old age but after marriage, the whole situation changes drastically. They perceive that their children are neither more willing to live with them nor they want to share their wages with them. Although the tendency of the crime against elderly is not very high in the region surveyed. But around 60-70 percent elderly people are aware of the crimes against them.

For a good and independent life in the future, a person should plan his/her future well in advance. As the society is changing drastically day by day, the dependency on the younger generation should be low. Because in case, they do not come forward, the life in the old age becomes measurable. The government should also encourage the people to secure their future well in advance.

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