



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL  
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Conditions of elderly – Case Studies from Salem District of Tamil Nadu, India

\* G. Jothimani

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India.

**Manuscript Info****Manuscript History:**

Received: 10 March 2013  
Final Accepted: 29 March 2013  
Published Online: April 2013

**Key words:**

Care giving,  
Health problems,  
Old Age Pension.

**Abstract**

Elderly play essential roles in the development of our nation as well as other social institutions. More number of elderly persons in a society puts pressure on the family and governments with regard to welfare for them. The health sector plays a vital role to increase the longevity on one side but create a situation for their standard of life decline to adjust with the processes like modernization and globalization on another side. Providing care to the elderly is a challenging task to the younger generation in this modern world. With an increasingly aging population in all developed societies, the role of care givers have been increasingly recognized as an important one, both functionally and economically. Many organizations which provide support for elderly particularly with disabilities have developed various forms of support for carers as well. In this context, the case studies bring out the living conditions of the elderly including their problems like stress, loneliness, poor economic conditions, health decline, and other related facets.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2013;. All rights reserved.

**Introduction**

Proportion of the elderly is tremendously increasing in India like other developed and developing society of the world. Healthy ageing is not only related to the advances in medical technology but also related to the interaction of a wide range of social factors such as maintaining and enhancing physical and cognitive functions being fully involved in the society, leading a stimulating and productive life, living in a stable social environment and having meaningful personal relationships. It is being considered as a gift of demographic transition as reduction of fertility and increasing the longevity due to advancement in health sectors. The poverty, lack of savings and other similar problems force the elderly depend on the rest of the family members to maintain their health, socialize the children and adjustment with others. In this process, 'the care giving' is a crucial phenomenon in case of more number of earning members if exit in the concerned families. The reciprocal relationship if exists between the aged and the care givers can explore the families as self regulating system because it is minimizing the

problems, expansion of relationship and modifying the behavior of the aged and provide uniqueness to the families and transform social values positively to the younger generations. Even though most families take great joy in providing care to their loved ones so that they can remain at home, the physical, emotional and financial consequences for the family caregiver can be overwhelming without some support, such as respite. Respite provides the much needed temporary break from the often exhausting challenges faced by the family caregiver.

The diminishing joint family system in India and the various other social factors created a boom in emergence of old age homes, especially in cities. Various surveys done in India and abroad, have confirmed that most of the elderly people consider home as a place where they can derive greatest emotional satisfaction. The tasks of care giving can result in caregiver strain. Elderly parents may become an emotional burden to their children. In the reversal of roles from parent as caregiver to child as caregiver, misunderstanding and ill-will can develop. Adult children may suffer multiple role strain as parents to their own children, spouses, employees, and caregivers to elderly parents (Cantor, 1983).

Corresponding author: [jothisoc@rediffmail.com](mailto:jothisoc@rediffmail.com)

Caregivers and care receivers may also suffer from a limited future outlook (Rakowski and Clark, 1985), or caregivers may simply tire out from the added duties at a time in their lives when they may have expected to be free from responsibility, perhaps in their own retirement. The following case studies bring out the magnitude of the problems of aged in Salem districts of Tamil Nadu.

### **Case Study – I**

Ponnamma is a widow living in a tiny village at the age of 75 and above. At her fiftieth age she lost her spouse but could help her three daughters to marry with the moral and physical support of her spouse. She struggled to get a suitable groom for the remaining solidarity daughter and completed her marriage. In spite of the deterioration of health conditions and she able to save a little bit amount and she manages the day to day life. The economic conditions of Ponnamma is worsening because she sold the small piece of agricultural land in connection with her daughters' marriage. The ignorance of the poor widow prevented her to know about the bank it can pay the interest for her savings. Now, she is living in a household as a uni-member family. The four daughters of her live with their families in the neighbouring places and they do come to her whenever she requires moral support and help. She gets the Old Age Pension (OAP) which is being given by the government through friends and relatives.

She and her spouse have transformed the social values, customs and traditional outlook to their daughters as expected by Indian social system. According to her she was realizing when socialize her children like the daughters can help the parents whenever they are in crisis. The reciprocal relationship is a crucial at the time of aged. Though the widow live nearby their daughters she attends them and even their daughters comes there whenever the occasion arise. Ponnamma raise three importance to the younger generations that daughters are not lesser than sons even they extend their cooperation, help, interest in all possible ways. Similarly Ponnamma too never disturbs their daughters and their family life. The case study brings out still family is structurally nuclear and functionally joint.

### **Case Study – II**

Anjalai is 75 and she lost her spouse at her age of 73 by chronic cold and before that she did her daughters' marriage. Now her daughter living nearby village. Even though her daughter is settled in another family she is providing financial and emotional support to

her mother. The deterioration of health condition stresses to depend her daughter as well as she is selling vegetables in small level and through that she is getting a little amount for the fulfillment of her life. Now she is living in a household as a uni-member family. She is getting Old Age Pension (OAP) and getting some welfare from the government through the help of friends and relatives. She did contract for her eyes and now she is surviving within that. She used to give a small amount for their grand children whenever they visit her.

Anjalai says that compare to other aged her situation is more better because she is getting care from her daughter whenever she needs it. Even this age she likes to avoid the financial dependency from her daughter and that is main reason for selling vegetables. Even she gets financial assistance to her daughter she likes to give packet money to her grand children whenever they visit her. She feels that even though she is a girl she take care of me more than a boy.

### **Case Study – III**

Pavalakodi is a 65 year's old married woman. She is having one acre agricultural land and her spouse is working in that land. She is having one daughter and one son. She lost three children during their birth itself before these two children. The daughter got married and settled in nearby village. Son does not get marry yet and he is working as a daily wager in a private factory but he is not giving any financial assistance to the parents. She met a road accident so that she lost her vision and she operated her eyes. She is getting Old Age Pension (OAP) and also getting some income from their agricultural land. She is still healthy and doing household work successfully.

She is comparing that daughter is providing more care than the son. Further, now a days the feeling of son preference diminishes because they neglect their aged parents she includes. She also extend that the feeling of dependency should be reduced among the aged. She feels that the aged have to save some amount to face their last phase of life without any financial problems.

### **Case Study IV**

Kamala is a 62 year old widow. She lost her husband two years ago. Her husband is ill healthy person and he had blood pressure and diabetic patient. She is having two daughters and two sons and all of them got married. Daughters are settled in nearby villages. Both the sons are working as a daily labour in a private factory, but no one is taking care of her. All of her children are staying in local itself but no one consider her even if she affected any health problem.

They never bother her to take to hospital even if she is ill. Occasionally they visit her along with the grand children. Daughters and their children also visit her occasionally. She is not at all having any financial assistance and her children never do any financial support. Sometimes or occasionally she get daily work and through that income she is surviving. She is getting Old Age Pension (OAP) from the government. The health of her not cooperating to do any work. So, now she is fully depending the OAP amount. She does not have any savings. She is telling that if she get any severe health problem she don't have money to take treatment.

Kamala is not at all having any financial assistance to take treatment whenever she falls in sick. She feels that her children are occasionally visiting because she do not have any savings amount and if I have money they might be provide proper care. Even though she does not have any financial assistance she is planning to give her own house to second son and that is the only property for her. She is worried about her loneliness and that is the very big punishment for her.

### Case Study V

Angamuthu is 75 years old man. His spouse doing work as a daily wager and both of them are getting OAP from the government and depending that amount for their survival. They started their married life 50 years before and they do not have children. He is not able to do any work because of severe health problems like alcer and getting ill because of old age. He is not taking food properly and sometimes his brother used to take him to hospital for treatment. Getting care from others is the difficult task for them and does not have any savings to face any major financial needs. He is living with his wife in one thatched house for their own village itself and that house is the only property for them. His wife is also getting regular health problems like joint pain, hearing problems etc., due to aged.

Angamuthu and his wife both of them are feeling that they are living alone and no one is there to take care of them. He also feels that if he is having children they might be take care of them. Health deterioration is the main problem for the aged is common for all. His health also deteriorated because of old age and other problems. He also feels that they are not getting any financial assistance and emotional support from any one. He realizes that saving is the only way to cope up the financial as well as physical assistance at the time of old age.

### Case Study VI

Chinnakannu 62 year old women. She is having two daughters and one son. Her spouse is working as a

daily wager and he use to work occasionally. She is not going to do any work since beginning. Two daughters got married and settled in nearby village and his son also got married and settled in separate house and he is also working as a daily wager in a private factory. Both the husband and wife are living in a separate home and they are suffering from continuous health problems and they take treatment in government hospitals without any one's help. Daughters and son are not at all providing any financial assistance and never provide care. Chinnakannu and her spouse are getting Old Age Pension (OAP) and, with the help of this pension these two are surviving.

Through this OAP these two aged are surviving and fulfilling their basic needs somehow. She feels that her son and daughters use to visit her occasionally but not at the time of crisis. Chinnakannu started her life as a house wife since marriage and earning is a difficult task for her.

### Case Study VII

Parvathi is a 68 years old widow and she lost her spouse 10 years ago. She is having two sons and one got married and another son is separated. The first son who is separated from his wife because he is affected in a filaria disease from his tender age onwards which is responsible for their separation and he is living with her without doing any work. She is getting Old Age Pension (OAP) and having one and half acre agricultural land and the land are not being cultivated. The ill health of her and son prevent them to do cultivation. There is no one to take care of her and she is surviving without anyone's help. Even she is old, she is the care taker for her first son.

Working in an unorganized sector is the significant factor for poor economic conditions of the elderly. Parvathi's second son is settled nearby village with his wife and five children and he is working as a daily labourer in a factory. She is worried about her first son's situation and after her no one is there to take care of her son. This case study brings out a truth that the aged also become a care giver to the needy.

### Case Study VIII

Bakya 75 years old widow last her spouse at her age of 60. She does not have any children. She is living alone and no one is there to provide care for her. She is getting Old Age Pension (OAP) and four kilogram rice given by the government for the welfare of the aged. Sometimes the peer group and relatives take her to hospital whenever she becomes sick. She is having Ulcer and hearing problem and these also reduce her physical strength. She is having a small

amount of savings in cooperative bank in her own village itself and getting minimum interest for that amount. Through the savings she is taking care for her health through the help of peer groups.

Bakya feels that without having children is a pathetic situation and that is providing more stress to her. The Old Age Pension (OAP) is the only financial assistance for most of the aged at their last phase of life. Now Bakya is living in a household as a uni-member family. Even though she is living alone she does not like to go to old age home. She wants to die in her own native itself.

### Case Study IX

Veeramma 70 year's old widow lost her spouse 25 years ago. She is having 4 daughters and one son. Three daughters got married and settled in nearby district and the remaining one daughter is mentally challenged and she is affected severe brain fever since her childhood. She is not cured after taking medicine for a long time. Another son is addict to alcoholic. After getting treatment in de-addiction centre he is still consuming the alcohol and now he is also living with her. Veeramma is having heart problem and she get minor attack also. Even though she is old she is a care giver for both of her son and daughter but no one is there to take care of her. Occasionally her daughters visit with their children that help her for stress relief. She is getting Old Age Pension (OAP) and that also not enough to help her. She is having savings in cooperative bank and getting minimum interest.

Few years before Veeramma worked as a daily wager but now her health is not allowing her to do any work. She is fully depending upon Old Age Pension (OAP) and the interest amount for her savings. With this financial survival she is having more mental stress due to the situation of both son and daughter's. In this age she learns the coping mechanism for the betterment of her life.

### Case Study X

Kannamma 62 years old widow lost her spouse at her age of 22 due to jaundice. She is having one son and one daughter. Her daughter got married and settled in neighbour village. Son also got married and settled in a small town. Now Kannamma is living with her elder sister's home because no one is there to take care. Her sister also a widow and does not have any children and she is living alone. So both these sisters are living together. She is having arthritis problems and her sister also affected some health problems. Both of them are not going to do any work and do not having any savings and they are getting Old Age Pension (OAP) for survival.

She is a poor widow that she lost her spouse in a young age itself. She faced several difficulties to overcome the problem of child bearing rearing activities in the beginning because she was a young widow in that stage. Later on she struggles a lot for the education of their children but they dropped their education in their schooling itself. Kannamma felt that she struggles a lot for the development of their children but now doesn't have any one to take care of her.

### Summary

Mostly the children are visiting their parents whenever the need comes. If the parents and children living together may arise adjustmental problems among them but living separate could not reduce the affection among them. So the parents and children are living separate in structure and functionally joint together. Health deterioration is the common problem for all elderly and poor economic condition prevent them to take medicine properly even for the curable diseases.

Aged can advice the younger generation that save some amount for their last part of life in the beginning itself, then only they can face their life without any financial crisis. Each and every aged should have savings then only they can survive their last phase of life peacefully. Most of the elderly felt that if they don't have savings they may fail to get care from their children or others. Among these case studies mostly all elderly are getting Old Age Pension (OAP) and fully depending that amount for their survival.

### Conclusion

With medical technology changing rapidly, elderly people living in today's society are facing changes that generations of previous elderly have not seen. Today's elderly people are more active even at the age seventy-five than the previous generations. It is simply because medical technology is allowing people to live healthier which enable them to live longer. Not only is technology allowing them to live longer but also because there are more living options for the elderly people which means they are not living alone at home. But living conditions of the elderly are very pathetic condition in this modern era. Most of the elderly are suffering without getting care from their children. Even aged also provide care to someone that who depends them. After crossing 60 ages all are getting some health problems and does not have any one to provide health care to them in general. Elderly are abandoning because of their poor situation. Depression can cause anyone of any age to lead a less productive life style, but for the elderly it

is worse, because they feel they have nothing to give others.

### References:

1. **Irudaya Rajan, S. 2006.** Population Ageing and Health in India. The Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT), Mumbai, July 2006.
2. **Rakowski and Clark, 1985,** Elderly Parents and Adult Children as Caregivers Highlights: An ERIC/CAPS Digest, Published in 1986.
3. **Cantor, M. Strain Among Caregivers:** A Study of Experience in the United States. THE GERONTOLOGIST, 23 (1983): 597-604.
4. **Rakowski, W., N.M. Clark.** Future Outlook, Caregiving, and Care-receiving in the Family Context. THE GERONTOLOGIST, 25 (1985): 618-623.