

A research on casteism and Structure of family to which the respondents belong with respect to the Place of Old Age Home

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Abstract:

Due to immense improvement in public facilities and public awareness across various section of population resulted in declining in both fertility and mortality; consequently, a large pool of an elderly population is formed. If a population is having such large size of an elderly population, it requires special attention from society and individual as well. Though the elderly people are believed to be given much respect in both society and in the family still aged people are one of the most vulnerable sections of the population in terms of their socio- economic and political concerns. The respect of aged people varies from family to family and from individual to individual. The nature and type of problems elderly people are facing is almost similar to the rest of the population is suffering from, but the way it should be tackled and dealt with needed a different approach and efficiency.

Introduction: The Indian society which was once considered a conservative society during pre-liberalization period changed drastically in post liberalization era. The manifestations are seen in the pathetic condition of the elderly. The perceptions and dreams of ordinary people have changed. Also, earlier youth stayed with their parents before marriage but now unmarried boys and girls are sharing same apartment and staying away from their parents.

Changes occur as a result of exchanges. Exchanges increase as a result of greater mobility. Thus, change in human values and institutions may be said to be the byproduct of this mobility or in other words globalization. The fact is that it not only affects people's cultural values but a significant alteration, rather an altogether transformation can take place in the identities of the people. This may further lead to intergenerational conflict and discord.

Globalization has, undoubtedly shaken the deep roots of age old tradition in India. It is

rightly said that in present form globalization is allabout grabbing than sharing and caring. In essence greed for globalization is killing India's soul (Vishakha Desai, President Asia Society).

Increasing challenges of globalization on all the fronts leave an individual in a state of trauma. Despite increase in material wealth life has become a daily struggle. As such one should think of oneself or one's parents is a big question. One of the most depressing aspects of globalization theory is that human beings on the whole are being ignored (Benefeld).

Literature Review:

Elder (1985) conception of social structure is a structure of roles; and life course is seen as a sequence of transition, role entries and exits, constituting a trajectory or "pathway defined by linking states across successive years, marked by sequence of life events and transitions, changes in state that are more or less abrupt".

Donald O. Cowgill (1974) comprehends that the rapid social change, mobility, urbanisation, literacy, the decline of ancestor worship, breakup of the extended family, loss of useful roles for the aged and increased proportions of aged in the population were declared to be associated with the lower status of the aged.

Simmons (1945) stated that the wish for a prolonged, healthy and functional life was a cultural universal. The quest for analyzing what regulates successful ageing has engrossed on various components of biological, social, psychological, and cultural components of ageing. Age is both a physical and social arrangement. It supports consolidate an individual's self- perception, identity, and social role expectations across the life time Crawford (2000).

Barrow et al (1992) urges that alterations in lifestyle, upgraded health care, and improved life expectancy have caused in an cumulative number of older adults who have dared the conventional images of old age as the time of decline and ill health. However, older adults remain to be seen as depressed, unpleasant, ill, disabled, deserted, deteriorated, and even likely to die.

McConatha et al. (2003) says that contemporary society has transformed biological and chronological age into social and cultural phenomena. Widespread ageism (negative and hostile perception towards aged people), in turn, accelerates ageing consciousness and increases the anxiety associated with the ageing process. John Alan Lee (1987) says that as the individual enters his later years, his expectations are lowered.

Martin Kohli (1988) argues that work not merely delivers the economic foundation of society, therefore of political conflicts, but is also the focus of its basic principles and world-view. Work is an actuality notonly of the economy and the polity but also of culture and the life-world. He justified

the engagement of individual in gainful activities as he says that society is indirectly treated as consisting of people who are profitably employed (and of their dependents) as there is no straight equivalent to the influence of work on everyday life.

Peter Townsend (1981) comments about the retirement and says that persons attaining retirement age do not appreciate it as warmly as they had thought they would. Many who have discharged deeply repentance their inactivity or loss of status.

Alan Walker (1981) comprehends that household income is merely one feature of the inclusive supply of resources which regulate the comparative position of diverse groups in the social and economic arrangement. He argues that it is not age as such that decides untimely retirement but the social association between age, health and the labour market. The obligation of unchanging retirement age essentially eliminates a considerable proportion of older workers from labour force participation and is, therefore, a major factor of economic and social position in old age.

R. Havighurst and R. Albrecht (1953) says that just as the farmer enjoys the fruits of the harvest at the close of the year's work so the older person is able to enjoy the fruits of his lifework. If he has worked hard and been thrifty, he can enjoy the physical comforts his work has earned for him.

Marie Guillemard (1982) says that in our society the transition from adulthood to old age is equaled by a decrease in social reputation and by a reduction of the role structure, even though the loss of certain functions may be "partially compensated" by the postulation of other new roles. He further says that the way in which the family is made up, the manner in which family exchanges take place, and the course followed in professional life are all largely determined by class position.

Sarah Irwin (1999) urges that in ageing related study work remains essential, as an instrument of social inclusion. Participation in remunerative employment is necessary to social identity and reputation and those not so occupied are seen to be marginalised in a range of ways.

Methodology and Result:

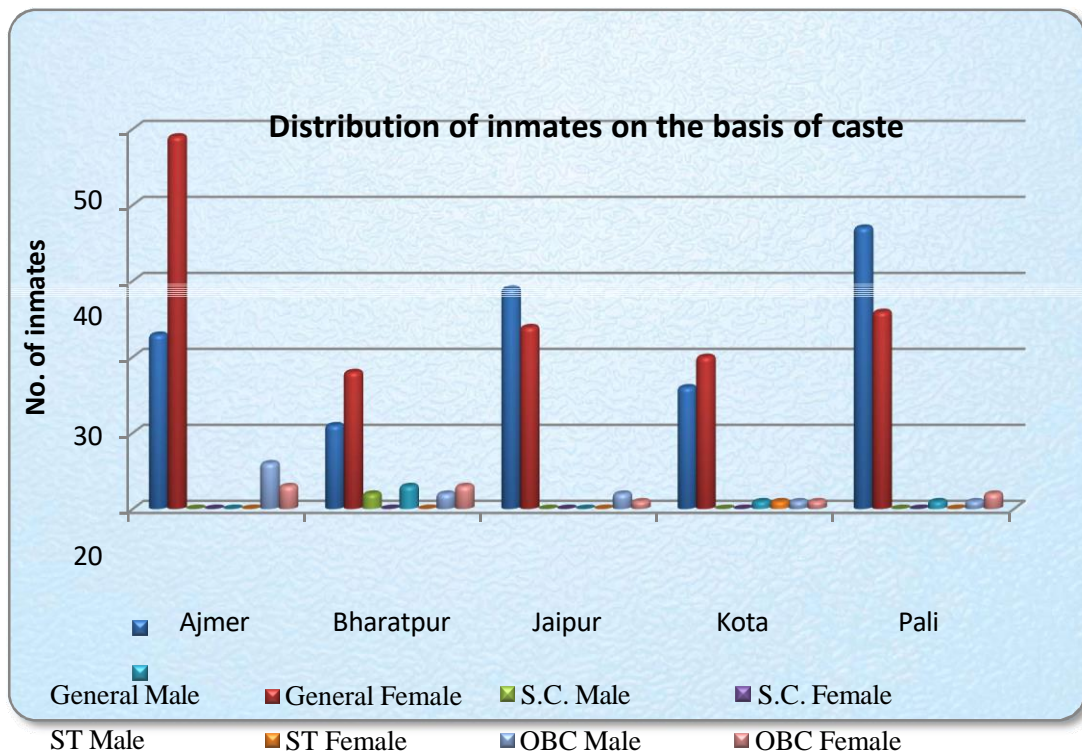
CASTEISM

A few decades ago Indian society was plagued by the evils of casteism. Thus, it would be very important to know the caste background of the respondents. To ascertain their castes, inmates were divided into general caste, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other backward caste.

Table 1.1

Distribution of inmates on the basis of caste

Place	Caste							
	General		S.C.		S.T.		OBC	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Ajmer	23	49	0	0	0	0	6	3
Bharatpur	11	18	2	0	3	0	2	3
Jaipur	29	24	0	0	0	0	2	1
Kota	16	20	0	0	1	1	1	1
Pali	37	26	0	0	1	0	1	2
Total No.	116	137	2	0	5	1	12	10
Total % out of total male(135)/female (148)	85.9	92.6	1.5	0.0	3.7	0.7	8.9	6.8



Reading the above table, we find a dominance of general category with 253 respondents falling in this category. There were 23, 11, 29, 16 and 37 males in Ajmer, Bharatpur, Jaipur, Kota and Pali, respectively. There were 49, 18, 24, 20 and 26 females from this category in Ajmer, Bharatpur, Jaipur, Kota and Pali, respectively. Only 2 inmates were from scheduled caste and 6 from scheduled tribes. Rajasthan is a tribal area and that presence is felt in our survey as 22 inmates fell in the category of other backward castes.

Family Structure

The family is the most important primary group in society. It is the first and the most immediate social environment to which a child is exposed. It is an outstanding primary group, because it is in the family

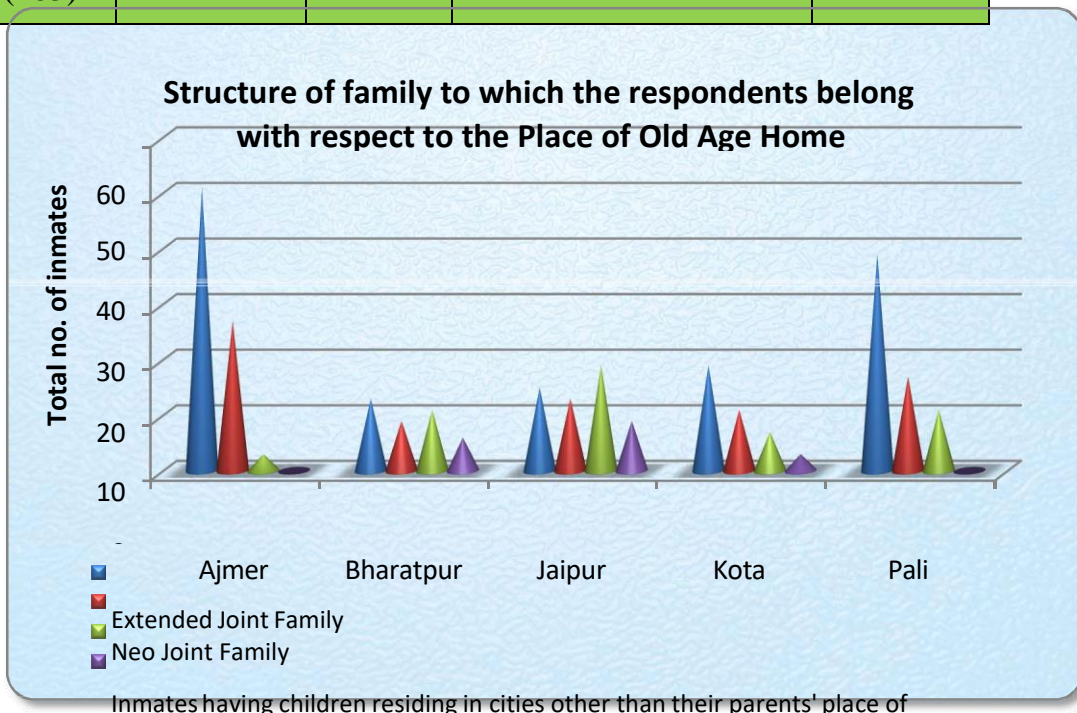
that a child develops the basic attitudes which define and determine his or her personality. It fulfils needs and performs functions which are indispensable for the continuity, integration and change in the social system.

Further, of all the groups that affect the lives of individuals in the society none touches them so intimately or as continuously as does the family. To analyse the family structure of the respondents they were divided into four types of families- Nuclear family, Traditional Joint family, Inmates having no child, and Inmates having children residing in cities other than their parents' place of residence.

Table 1.2

Structure of family to which the respondents belong with respect to the Place of Old Age Home

Place	Structure of family			
	Extended Joint Family	Neo Joint Family	Inmates having children residing in cities other than their parents' place of residence	Inmates having no child
Ajmer	51	27	3	0
Bharatpur	13	9	11	6
Jaipur	15	13	19	9
Kota	19	11	7	3
Pali	39	17	11	0
Total No.	137	77	51	18
Total % out of total no. of inmates (283)	48.4	27.2	18.0	6.4



Out of total 283 respondents 77 came from the nuclear family background. A whopping 137 (about 48%) either abandoned or were abandoned from the traditional joint families. Only a meager, about 6.3% (18) inmates were such who did not have any children.

About 18% (51) residents inhabited the old age homes due to migration of their children to the other cities. A few in them were suffering from PICA syndrome (Parents in India and Children living abroad). When asked why they didn't accompany their children to abroad. Many replied that they wanted to die here and thus, spend a few remaining years in their motherland.

CONCLUSION:

Majority of inmates in the old age homes belonged to general category which includes Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas.

It was observed that in Pali as the old age home is managed and run by the upper caste, a meager no. of S.C. inmates were registered reflecting deep roots in casteism. Pali, being the native place was easy to pay frequent visits. This finding is the subsequent result of such visits.

Bharatpur housed maximum no. of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes which indicates that a large population belonging to these categories is found here (as is also presented in the census). The Bharatpur old age home was meant for destitute and was absolutely free so this may be one of the reasons that they registered people without the discrimination of caste.

The above table indicates a dominance of traditional joint families in Indian society, whether neo or extended as maximum inmates hailed from joint families. At the same time their presence in large no. indicates that the inmates once belonged to the joint families but they are disintegrating at a very fast rate.

MNC culture, degenerating value system, dual career families, migration, individualism may be cited as some of the reasons for encountering structural and functional changes in the institution of family.

A total role reversal is observed in the families which leads to the dependence of elderly

on young generation.

Due to forces of urbanization and modernization, the Indian institute of family which was once considered to be the cornerstone is in the teeth of rapid transition.

Families where individuality is a core value under the influence of consumeristic society the collective responsibility of providing quality care to the elderly parents is a far cry. More and more elderly are either being abandoned or themselves are abandoning families due to a host of reasons. This phenomenon is evident in the pathetic condition of the aged and mushrooming up of old age homes, day care centres, retirement homes and the like in every nook and corner of our society.

The most important feature of disintegrating joint families is the erosion of authority commanded by the elderly. They are now no longer considered as 'Karta' of the family. They do not have any say in the decision making process at present. The elderly are forced to move from centre to the periphery (Lakshmi V. Nair).

Recently, the growing phenomena of indignity, injustice, indifference, dishonor, disregard, lack of care and psychological torment has made the elderly as one of the most vulnerable sections of society. Migration of young generation in view of better opportunities may lead elderly to join old age homes. As shown in the table about 18% elderly in the old age homes were those whose children resided in different cities or even abroad.

Here, it is worth mentioning that sons are solely responsible for taking care of elderly parents in Indian tradition. It is considered sinful to live with the married daughters. There were some inmates belonging to such category so in spite of living at their daughters' home they move to old age homes.

It was interesting to find that two inmates in Jaipur were such who only had daughters. They did not want to reside with them and thus moved here. Although, the girls payed frequent visits along with their husbands. These respondents belonged to the upper class. This reflects the deep roots of tradition.

It is evident that a significant number of inmates took shelter in old age homes that belonged to Neo joint families.

Again loosening of family ties, loss of patience, craving for privacy, strive for individual freedom are some of the reasons that may be cited which compel the elders to leave their families.

Infertility (having no child) is considered a sin in Indian society. It is often said that one cannot attain salvation until his/her son perform the ritual rites of the dead body. Earlier people were more inclined to adopt a baby to tread the tradition.

The times have changed now. In spite of engaging themselves in a daily skirmish, the elderly think it better to move to such old age homes where they can mingle with like-minded people and live the wee hours of their life peacefully. No single (unmarried) respondent was found in the survey.

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