INFLUENCE OF FAMILY SOLIDARITY ON LIFE SATISFACTION OF THE ELDERLY

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ABSTRACT
The study was carried out in Dharwad district, Karnataka with a sample of 220 elderly persons. The results revealed a positive and significant relationship between family solidarity and life satisfaction of the elderly i.e good family solidarity improved the life satisfaction of the elderly and poor family solidarity reduced the life satisfaction of the elderly. Therefore it is evident from the study that amongst all the support, it is the support from the family i.e family solidarity that keeps a person satisfied and contented in life.

Key words : Family solidarity, Elderly persons.

INTRODUCTION
Family is the most universal of the form of associations. During old age, a person has to rely upon his family for security, companionship and emotional satisfaction. Family solidarity is the degree of attachment that exists among the family members. It is the interaction of associational solidarity, affectional solidarity and consensual solidarity. Associational solidarity is the frequency and patterns of interaction in various types of activities. Affectional solidarity is the type and degree of reciprocity of the sentiments. Consensual solidarity is the degree of agreement on values, attitudes and beliefs among family members (Bengtson and Schraders, 1982).

Burgess (1968) expressed that family was a continuing system of interacting personality bound together by shared rituals and rules even more than by mere biology. He defined the family as a “unit of interacting personalities” which means that it is not the collection of only a specific number of people but also an aggregate of particular relationships and shared memories, successes, failures and aspiration. During old age particularly, the scope and sphere of their social interaction is reduced to the family circle.

The present age of industrialization and modernization have widened the “generation gap” loosening the emotional ties between generations. This has caused serious socio-psychological problems to the elderly especially in a country like India where the value of family, family solidarity, family relations were considered to a greater extent. Hence the study was carried out to find the influence of family solidarity on life satisfaction of the elderly.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
Selection of the sample : A list of large number of elderly people (above 50 years) working in different government institutions (Banks, LIC, Forestry office, Police Department, school and colleges) who had pension benefits was obtained. The retired people (below 70 years) were selected from the “Registered Pensioner Association” situated in Dharwad district, Karnataka. The association has maintained up to date list of pensioners right from 1975. The elderly staying with spouse and children and who agreed to cooperate in the study were selected as respondents. The total sample comprised of 220 elderly (117 males and 103 females).

Measures used : To find out the family solidarity the questions prepared by the investigator with the help of items given by David et al. (1988) were used. It consisted of 12 statements. Each statement had four alternative responses carrying the score of 1-4. Thus the total score ranged from 12-48. In the present study the score ranged from 12-46. Based on the raw score the respondents were classified into
three groups ‘Good’ (37-48), ‘Moderate’ (24-36), and ‘Poor’ (12-23) in family solidarity. Further the scale developed and standardized by Ramamurti (1970) was used to collect information regarding life satisfaction. The scale had 10 statements with six alternative responses carrying the score of 1-6. The total score ranges from 10-60. The lower score indicates low life satisfaction and higher score indicates high life satisfaction. The respondents were classified into three categories based on the raw score i.e ‘low’ (10-20), ‘medium’ (21-40) and ‘high’ (41-60) life satisfaction.

Statistical analysis: The results were analyzed using the Karl Persons product moment correlation coefficient. Further, its significance was tested using “t” test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data in Table 1 reveals that relatively a larger proportion (63.64%) of the respondents had poor family solidarity, one fourth (25.00 %) of them had moderate and only 11.36 per cent of them had good family solidarity.

Family solidarity indicates the frequency and patterns of interaction among the family members in various types of activities, the type and degree of positive sentiments held about family members and the degree of reciprocity of these sentiments, the degree of agreement on values, attitudes and beliefs among family members and the degree to which family members exchange services or assistance (Bengtson and Schrader, 1982).

During old age the scope and sphere of their social interaction is reduced to the family circle. However, the structural change caused due to separation of children because of higher education, children entering into the wed-lock in search of good jobs reduced the physical communication and also now-a-days launching stage is preponed because of less number of children and nuclear family which made the separation at an early stage. Another reason for poor family solidarity might be that the difference of opinion, attitude, interest, values between generations what is called as “generation gap” also loosens the emotional tie. This results in serious socio-psychological problems to the elderly especially in a country like India where the value of family, family solidarity, family relations were considered to a greater extent. Hence in the present study it was found that majority of the respondents had poor family solidarity.

Further a positive and significant relationship between family solidarity and life satisfaction was observed (Table 2) i.e. good family solidarity improves the life satisfaction of the elderly and poor family solidarity reduced the life satisfaction of the elderly.

Life satisfaction of an individual during old age was very much influenced by various factors such as pleasure in daily activities, meaningfulness in life, goodness of fit between the desired and achieved goals, perceived health, financial security and social contact. In addition to this the other factors like the type of family in which they lived, relationship maintained with family members, availability of facilities in the family and the extent of participation in social and religious activities might also affect the life satisfaction in old age.

Due to rapid stride in urbanization and industrialization, social structures and values were undergoing transformation from traditional to modern. The induced modernization has eventually led to the degradation of status, authority, love, affection and kinship ties of the aged in different degrees resulting in manifold problems for the aged. The drastic changes in the education, occupation, marriage institution and family life in the society have made younger generation to move away from the family leaving behind their aged parents. Thus, the aged people many times found it difficult to secure shelter in the home of their own children. In a study conducted by

<table>
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<th>Level of family solidarity</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>37-48</td>
<td>11.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>24-36</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>12-23</td>
<td>63.64</td>
</tr>
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Table 2. Correlation between family solidarity and life satisfaction

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Life satisfaction</th>
<th>‘t’ value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family solidarity</td>
<td>+0.162</td>
<td>2.424*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - Significant at 5 % level
Joseph (1988) showed that the declining opportunities for communication between the old and the young was a major factor for problems during old age. Bottlenecks in interaction between two generations have contributed to much tension among the old and to several occasions for conflict between the two groups. Thus it could be concluded that good relationship and attachment of the family members with the elders improved the family solidarity in turn increasing the life satisfaction of the elders and poor relationship and attachment of the family members in turn reduced the life satisfaction of the elders. Therefore it was evident from the study that amongst all the support, it was the support from the family i.e family solidarity that kept a person satisfied and contented in life.

REFERENCES