

A Geographical Study of Growing Elderly Population in Varanasi City, India

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Abstract

The contemporary society is differential towards the elderly due to gradual erosion of traditional values and rapid changes in socio-economic conditions. They not suffer only from health and social problems but also face the economic stringency. In a competitive society where usefulness is measured by economic yardstick, the aged are considered useless. The rapidity in technological advancement and its accompanying social change bewilders the aged persons attempt to grapple with it. As a result old people are today faced with a number of social, economic and psychological problems which need to be understood in order to devise any comprehensive programme for the welfare of the aged. The present study is a step in this direction and aims at understanding the status of growing elderly population in Varanasi city. The paper presents the situation of the old age population and discusses some recommendations to improve the ageing scenario. Finally it has been found that the ageing process has been influenced by the socio-economic development of the society. So, if there is late in thinking about socio-economic implications of population ageing, there will be more issues and questions than answers. It is proper time to seek appropriate and positive solutions to meet the challenges of ageing for the next millennium.

Keywords: Elderly, Economic and Social Condition, Marital Status, Religion.

Introduction

The phenomenon of population aging has become one of the most dramatic and influential development in the twentieth century. On one hand, life expectancy increases and on the other hand increases the problems and needs of aged population (Asiya Nasreen, 2009). Older persons may become grandparents, may work less or may stop working, or they may

undertake different activities; and they also tend to be more prone to diseases and disabilities than other adults. However, all of these changes evolve over time and are perceived differently across societies. Traditionally society looked positively at old age and maintained that 'old is gold', in terms of maturity, experience and wisdom. But today, old age is regarded negatively and the common expressions 'old and sick' 'old and frail' 'old and poor' 'old and crabby' 'old and crotchety' 'old and useless' reflect the dependency and inactiveness of the aged. The aged are often described as "old and senile". All these terms indicate that they have lost their capability to be economically and socially productive. Several terms are being used in recent years to describe them in a more positive manner such as 'senior citizens', 'the elderly', 'third age individuals' and 'individuals in the twilight of life'.(K. Pappathi, 2007). Bose (2000) observes that a decline in the institution of joint family, less number of children, migration of younger members to the cities, acute paucity of accommodation in urban areas, complexities of modern life and economic dependency as major reasons for the shrinking position and status of the elderly. Expectation of care makes parents invest in their children as provider of old age security. However the fast paced social and technological changes and the globalised market economy system have reinforced an attitudinal change in the younger generation towards care giving.

The state is not in a position to provide financial assistance to older people for their maintenance, as the cost is prohibitive. Unfortunately, the current scenario is such that a majority of older people today are not financially sound in terms of their savings and investment.

Major Objectives

The purpose of the present study is to look into the situation in which the elderly people live and the modality they have to get over the situations and health problems. Keeping these considerations in view, the major objectives of present paper are:

1. To analyse the socio-economic characteristics of the old age population in Varanasi city.
2. To suggest ways and means through which the situation of the elderly could be further improved in study area.

Data Sources and Methodology

For the present study, attention has been focused on six zones (5 different zones comprising 90 wards and Banaras Hindu University) in Varanasi City. Except *Banaras Hindu University* those five different zones are 'Kotwali', 'Dashashwamedh', 'Bhelupur', 'Adampur' and 'Varunapar' respectively. The required data for the present study were collected through field survey. In the present study, information from the elderly respondents has been elicited with the help of interview schedule. Considering the main objectives a sample size of 660 aged including men and women were selected. 110 aged has taken from each zone. The selection of the elderly was done with the help of purposive sampling. This survey was carried out during

October to December 2012 and March to May 2013. Processing, tabulation and analysis part for different responses have been done by using The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software (15 and 16 version) programme exclusively.

Location

The city of Varanasi is located in the middle Ganga valley of North India. The Varanasi City is the district headquarters of the Varanasi district. Present study is conducted in Varanasi city which is located along the left crescent shaped bank of Ganga River. It extends between 25°14' N to 25°22' N latitudes and 82°56' E to 83°03' E longitudes covering an area of 79.79 km². Overall population density of city is 15,070 persons/km² with 10, 91,918 population according to 2001 census. The city of Varanasi is broadly divided into two zones: the Cis Varuna and the Trans Varuna zone (Rana P.B. Singh, 2008). The city had 40 municipal wards in 1991, which have now been increased to 90 in 2001. The city lying between the Varuna River in the north and the Assi River in the south is surrounded by three development blocks: *Chirgaon* shares north-eastern boundary, *Harahua* block is in northern side while its eastern boundary is touched by the *Kashi Vidyapeeth block*.

Major Findings

Respondents' Age by Sex and Caste composition

Populations of male and female elderly respondents in different age groups for Varanasi city have been shown in table 1.1. In study area, the male respondents are comparatively higher in proportion as compared to female aged respondents. Out of the total population of the elderly it is important to see which of the sex has a longer life expectancy and hence, accordingly their problems and solutions.

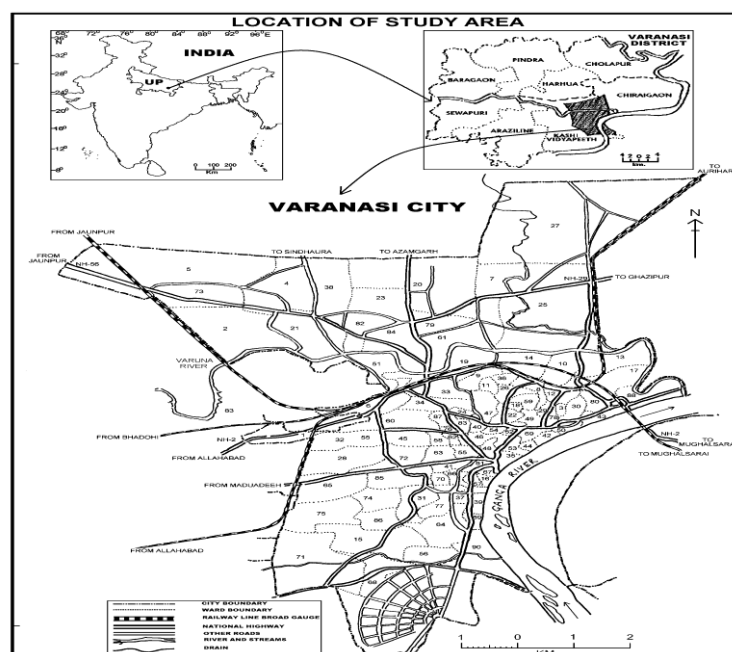


Table reveals that in all age groups, i.e., 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79 and 80+ males are surviving more in comparison to females. An analysis about the personal and socio-economic characteristics of the elderly respondents revealed that majority of the respondents (344 persons) belonged to the age-group between 60 to 64 years and only a small proportion represented the highest age group of 80 years and above consisting only 29 persons.

Table 1.1: Respondents' Age by Sex composition

Age-group	Respondents' Sex			
		Female	Male	Total
60-64	Number	115	229	344
	Percent	33.40	66.60	100
65-69	Number	32	105	137
	Percent	23.40	76.60	100
70-74	Number	31	41	72
	Percent	43.10	56.90	100
75-79	Number	16	62	78
	Percent	20.50	79.50	100
80+	Number	13	16	29
	Percent	44.80	55.20	100
Total	Number	207	453	660
	Percent	31.40	68.60	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

Age of the old people (in different caste groups) is significant in determining their living arrangements. While the caste system has been present among all categories. Finally, it is important to examine the relationship that exists between the chronological age and the different caste categories. Among 660 interviewed elderly respondents, there were 340 (51.5%) general, 184 (27.90%) OBC, and 136 (20.60%) ST/ SC categories. Majority of general were in the 60-64 years age group. OBC percentage was maximum (41.4%) in 80+ age groups and SC/STs were more in 60-74 age-group (table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Respondents' Age by Caste composition

Age-groups	Caste				
		ST/SC	OBC	General	Total
60-64	Number	81	106	157	344
	Percent	23.60	30.80	45.60	100
65-69	Number	18	32	87	137

	Percent	13.10	23.40	63.50	100
70-74	Number	22	19	31	72
	Percent	30.50	26.4	43.10	100
75-79	Number	11	15	52	78
	Percent	14.10	19.20	66.70	100
80+	Number	4	12	13	29
	Percent	13.80	41.40	44.80	100
Total	Number	136	184	340	660
	Percent	20.60	27.90	51.50	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

After cross tabulating different caste and sex categories in table 1.3, it is conclusion that there are 77.40% male and 22.60% of General category following 65.80% male and 34.20% females of OBC category, 53.55% male and 46.45% females in ST/SCs category.

Table 1.3: Respondents' Caste by Sex composition

Caste category	Sex			
		Female	Male	Total
ST/SC	Number	67	69	136
	Percent	46.45	53.55	100
OBC	Number	63	121	184
	Percent	34.20	65.80	100
General	Number	77	263	340
	Percent	22.60	77.40	100
Total	Number	207	453	660
	Percent	31.40	68.60	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

Respondents' Age by Religion

The percentage distribution of the respondents by religion and chronological age groups is presented in table 1.4. The distribution of respondents according to their religious affiliations shows that an overwhelming majority i.e., 73.50 percent of the respondents of enumerated households belong to Hindus followed by Muslims, Sikhs and others in that order. Among the non- Hindus the largest group, that is Muslim. The Hindu households are more in 65-69 and 80+ age groups and the Muslim respondents are maximum in 60-64 and 80+ age groups following other religion community Sikh and others.

Table 1.4: Respondents' Age by Religion

Age-groups	Religion					
		Muslim	Hindu	Sikh	Others	Total
60-64	Number	64	242	20	18	344
	Percent	18.60	70.30	5.80	5.20	100
65-69	Number	12	110	2	13	137
	Percent	8.80	80.30	1.50	9.50	100
70-74	Number	9	53	7	3	72
	Percent	12.50	73.60	9.70	4.20	100
75-79	Number	11	56	3	8	78
	Percent	14.10	71.80	3.80	10.20	100
80+	Number	5	24	0	0	29
	Percent	17.20	82.80	0.00	0.00	100
Total	Number	101	485	32	42	660
	Percent	15.30	73.50	4.80	6.40	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

We have only (N=32, Sikh) and (N=42) other respondents including Jain, Bauddha and Christian respondents in the sample. This distribution of the respondents according to these caste groups and religion shows that among the respondents of all the religions an overwhelming majority belong to the higher caste groups. This may be because people having higher socio-economic status alone can afford to live in city like Varanasi after retirement. The table shows that the percentage of the respondents from the higher caste groups is comparatively higher among the Hindus than among the other castes. It may be due to the fact that the majority of the Hindu coming from districts and cities other than Uttar Pradesh incidentally belong to the higher caste groups.

Respondents' Caste and Religion by Marital status

Table 1.5 provides a detailed account with regard to the different castes and marital status of the respondents. Among the elderly respondents in currently married category, respondents in all castes constitute a favourable percentage. The same trend is also found with regard to the widowed and widower persons. The widowed and widowers constitute the remaining percent of the respondents with a little difference in all castes.

Table 1.5: Respondents' Caste by Marital Status

Caste categories	Marital status						
		Unmarried	Currently married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed/widower	Total
ST/SC	Number	0	99	2	0	35	136
	Percent	0.00	72.79	1.47	0.00	25.73	100
OBC	Number	3	144	1	0	36	184
	Percent	1.60	78.30	0.50	0.00	19.60	100
General	Number	3	277	0	3	57	340
	Percent	0.90	81.50	0.00	0.90	16.80	100
Total	Number	6	520	3	3	128	660
	Percent	0.90	78.80	0.50	0.50	19.40	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

Where as there is very little percentages in the all caste categories in regard to other marital status (unmarried, separated and divorced). In religion wise marital status, it is not much different from the caste and marital status. It is already observed that a bulk of the respondents of different religion groups (nearly 80%) comes under currently married (table 1.6)

Table 1.6: Respondents' Religion by Marital status

Religion	Marital status						
		Unmarried	Currently married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed/widower	Total
Muslim	Number	2	76	1	3	19	101
	Percent	2.00	75.20	1.00	3.00	18.80	100
Hindu	Number	3	384	1	0	97	485
	Percent	0.60	79.20	0.20	0.00	20.00	100
Sikh	Number	1	30	0	0	1	32
	Percent	3.10	93.80	0.00	0.00	3.10	100
Others	Number	0	30	1	0	11	42
	Percent	0.00	71.42	2.38	0.00	26.19	100

Total	Number	6	520	3	3	128	660
	Percent	0.90	78.80	0.50	0.50	19.40	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

Respondents' Age, Castes and Religion by Educational background

Regarding the role of education and social status of adjustment in old age, (Simpson, 1966:134) cited that education increases an individual's skills and interests with the result that when elderly faces a difficult transition period he has a greater variety of activities to which he can turn to and therefore makes better adjustment. So, education is functionally significant for the different social classes and this relationship manifests itself in a higher coefficient of adjustment for the better educated and socially privileged persons.

Among the aged in study area, respondents in the age group of 60-64 entertained a little more percent in educational level like illiterate (55.70%), Primary (37.10%), Junior High School (49.30%), high School (50.60%), inter (46.40%), and graduation and above (61.85%) in comparison to the other age groups (table 1.7).

Table 1.7: Respondents' Age by Educational status

Educational Status	Age						
		60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	Total
Illiterate	Number	98	34	18	20	6	176
	Percent	55.70	19.30	10.20	11.40	3.40	100
Primary	Number	36	21	12	13	15	97
	Percent	37.10	21.60	12.40	13.40	15.50	100
Junior high school	Number	36	13	12	10	2	73
	Percent	49.30	17.80	16.40	13.70	2.70	100
High school	Number	43	11	16	9	6	85
	Percent	50.60	12.90	18.80	10.60	7.10	100
Intermediate	Number	32	18	3	16	0	69
	Percent	46.40	26.10	4.30	23.20	0.00	100
Graduation & above	Number	99	40	11	10	0	160
	Percent	61.85	25.00	6.87	6.25	0.00	100
Total	Number	344	137	72	78	29	660
	Percent	52.10	20.80	10.90	11.80	4.40	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

The educational background of different castes and religions of the elderly respondents have discussed in table 1.8 and table 1.9, regarding the educational attainment, the more percentage

of illiterates comes under ST/SC category (46.32%) followed by other backward castes (33.7%) and general (15%). Among the total respondents, 14.70% have primary education in which 28 out of 97 persons in ST/SCs are more proportion. In regard to higher studies, respondents of general and other backward castes enjoyed much better education than others.

After analyzing religion wise education, it is evident that 41.60% Muslims are illiterate consisting others (35.71%) and Hindu (24.30%) illiterate. There is one significant fact that, one person out of 32 Sikh respondents is illiterate. In relation to higher education, near about 28.12% percent Sikh respondents are highly educated. This proportion is almost same among others like Hindu, Muslims and others (table 1.9).

Table 1.9: Respondents' Religion by Educational Status

Religion	Educational status							Total
		Illiterate	Primary	Junior high school	High school	Intermediate	Graduation & above	
Muslim	Number	42	14	7	9	7	22	101
	Percent	41.60	13.90	6.90	8.90	6.90	22.78	100
Hindu	Number	118	69	58	66	55	119	485
	Percent	24.30	14.20	12.00	13.60	11.30	24.53	100
Sikh	Number	1	4	4	10	4	9	32
	Percent	3.10	12.50	12.50	31.30	12.50	28.12	100
Others	Number	15	10	4	0	3	10	42
	Percent	35.71	23.81	9.52	0.00	7.14	23.81	100
Total	Number	176	97	73	85	69	160	660
	Percent	26.70	14.70	11.10	12.90	10.50	24.24	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

Respondents' Caste and Religion by Occupation

The work participation and leisure activities of the old depend heavily, besides other things, on socio-economic conditions. The information to which effect has been provided in table 1.10, it may be seen that the old men tended to vary from each other in their socio-economic contexts more or less in same way as do other groups. They represent castes of all major hierarchical levels; belong mostly to General, OBC and ST/SC categories. There is a school of thought who believes that elderly persons should engage themselves in some income earnings activity so that they will not feel bored, isolated, helpless and hopeless besides getting some income for their own expenses or to help out in the family.

Activity of a person is classified into whether they are engaged in any economic activity (working), retired from work, work within the household, unemployed or any other.

Table 1.10: Respondents' Caste by Occupation

Caste-categories	Occupation								
		Agriculture	Industrial worker	Business	Service	Daily Wage Earner	Others	Non-workers	Total
ST/SC	Number	8	8	9	37	39	28	7	136
	Percent	5.88	5.88	6.61	27.21	28.68	20.59	5.15	100
OBC	Number	38	10	9	54	25	42	6	184
	Percent	20.70	5.40	4.90	29.30	13.60	22.80	3.30	100
General	Number	38	27	20	133	39	61	22	340
	Percent	11.20	7.90	5.90	39.10	11.50	17.90	6.50	100
Total	Number	84	45	38	224	103	131	35	660
	Percent	12.70	6.80	5.80	33.90	15.60	19.80	5.30	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

Those who are workers are further classified by the type of occupation in which they are engaged in. the caste composition of elderly which are engaged in economic activity is given in table 1.10. This shows that Out of total 660 elderly respondents, 340 elderly persons are related to general caste in contributing activity comprising 184 in OBC category and ST/SC (136). Table also analyses that 33.90% are engaged in service followed by others (19.80%), daily wage earner (15.60%), agriculture (12.70%), industrial worker (6.80%) and business (5.80%).

Table 1.11: Respondents' Religion by Occupation

Religion	Occupation								
		Agri-culture	Industrial worker	Business	Service	Daily Wage Earner	Others	Non-workers	Total
Muslim	Number	11	9	6	27	27	11	10	101
	Percent	10.90	8.90	5.90	26.70	26.70	10.90	9.90	100
Hindu	Number	70	32	29	165	64	103	22	485
	Percent	14.40	6.60	6.00	34.00	13.20	21.20	4.50	100
Sikh	Number	0	1	2	15	5	9	0	32
	Percent	0.00	3.10	6.30	46.90	15.60	28.10	0.00	100

Others	Number	3	3	1	17	7	8	3	42
	Percent	7.14	7.14	2.38	40.48	16.67	19.05	7.14	100
Total	Number	84	45	38	224	103	131	35	660
	Percent	12.70	6.80	5.80	33.90	15.60	19.80	5.30	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

In addition to income of the family, another factor which is particularly important for the aged is the economic status of the old people themselves. An attempt to assess the economic status of the elderly respondents related to different religious communities revealed that majority of the respondents were economically independent in the sense that they were either working or engaged in business and agriculture and or daily wage earner. The religious composition of the elderly respondents with their contributing activity is given in table 1.11.

When economic status of the respondents was analyzed in respect to elderly, it was found that the number of respondents among the religious groups, Hindu community numerically in dominant position followed by Muslim, Sikh, Christian and others. Religious difference in this view is very conspicuous. Majority of Hindu community engaged in service (34%) following Sikh (46.90%), Muslims (26.70%) and others (40.48%). On the other hand the major source of income to the Muslim elderly respondents, they are daily wage earner (26.70%). On an average of 5.30 per cent elderly respondents in all religious communities are non-workers.

Contacts with Children and Relatives

Contacts can be maintained either through visiting relatives or being visited by them or through other channels of communications like letters, telephone etc. In this study, however, interpersonal contacts through visits alone are considered on the assumptions that the older persons like meeting people and talking to them rather than through interpersonal telephone calls or letters. As one gets old, the desire to meet the children and relatives as often as possible increases. Contact with children here refers to contact with that child who stay outside the home. It does not mean contact with all children. Percentage distribution of contact of elderly with their children and relatives is given in table 1.12, 17.10% of the elderly do have contact with their children often. 57.10 percent elderly have visited their children sometimes.

Table 1.12: Elderly Reporting Frequency of Visit to Children Staying Away

Name of Zone	Elderly Response				
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Total
Kotwali	Number	18	72	20	110
	Percent	16.40	65.50	18.20	100
Dashashwamedh	Number	19	74	17	110

	Percent	17.30	67.30	15.50	100
Bhelupur	Number	31	62	17	110
	Percent	28.20	56.40	15.50	100
Adampur	Number	36	53	21	110
	Percent	32.70	48.20	19.10	100
Varunapar	Number	36	54	20	110
	Percent	32.70	49.10	18.20	100
BHU	Number	30	62	18	110
	Percent	27.30	56.40	16.40	100
Total	Number	170	377	113	660
	Percent	25.80	57.10	17.10	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

And rest 25.80 percent respondents never visited to their children. Age-wise the old-old male elderly keep comparatively more contact than other age groups.

Children Support to the Aged Parents at Old age

It has been reported by 79.80 percent respondents that on account of any matter, there is children support available to them. Only 133 aged has given negative responses (table 1.13). It is human nature to develop emotional attachment to their children in the family who is more helpful and cares them during the sufferings. The relationship between parents and children is intricate and important particularly for the older people. It is understandable that the aged rely more on children (sons, daughters and grandchildren). They not only provide care and support to the parents but also manage the expenditure on their medicare. They derive emotional support from their family and have immense attachment with their children.

Table 1.13: Respondents' Response about Children Support to Parents

Name of Zone	Response			
		No	Yes	Total
Kotwali	Number	22	88	110
	Percent	20.00	80.00	100
Dashashwamedh	Number	19	91	110
	Percent	17.30	82.70	100
Bhelupur	Number	21	89	110
	Percent	19.10	80.90	100
Adampur	Number	19	91	110

	Percent	17.30	82.70	100
Varunapar	Number	25	85	110
	Percent	22.70	77.30	100
BHU	Number	27	83	110
	Percent	24.50	75.50	100
Total	Number	133	527	660
	Percent	20.20	79.80	100

Source: Based on personal survey, 2012-2013

It is observed that for them, the most liked person in the household are their grandchildren. They love their grandchildren because they have very strong relationship, stronger than their own children. The liking or emotional attachment for the spouse is overall very low although on them they rely for care and support at needful time.

Conclusion

Although the proportion of elderly population is not much compared to the young and working population, the absolute size is not small. Because of deteriorating social and economic conditions coupled with poverty the family structure has been changing to a nuclear family. A change in the family size, from large to small family norm has also future implications. With smaller number of children, the burden of providing care for their elderly parents will become heavier i.e. with less number to share this responsibility (Baginda, 1987). Since aging is not still a major problem of Varanasi city and as such there is no policy for the elderly in Varanasi city. There is strong evidence from available information and from the projected population, the problem of elderly population will be enormous because of enormous change in social, cultural and economic conditions. One of the objectives of the present paper is to draw some opinions of the elderly what should be considered for the elderly and they offered a range of suggestions and opinions for the welfare of the elderly population. Some sort of policy should be adopted to cope with the increasing elderly population because of falling fertility and increasing life expectancy of elderly population. Finally the most crucial factor influencing the condition of elderly in a city like Varanasi will be the culture, tradition and values. The key issue is whether norms are strong enough to guarantee that families will maintain their roles and keep their traditional ties to their elderly despite the increase in the dependency burden, the decline of the family economy, migration and increasing participation of women in economic activity outside the home. The future prospects for the elderly differ according to development and one would expect continued modernization will lead to a future decline in the status of old people in Varanasi city.

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