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Changing Relationship of Grandparents and Grandchildren

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to understand the socio-demographic profile of the older persons, their relationship with grandchildren as well as the expectations from them. It is very important to know how opportunities recognize younger generation and it is also necessary for the ageing world. Grand parenting is an important supportive service for grandchildren to develop their socialization process. Descriptive design was followed and the sample of the study comprised of 50 rural elderly grandparents who are having grand children. Purposive sampling method was adopted to select the sample. The researcher has used self prepared interview schedule method to collect the data regarding the socio-economic conditions, relationship between grandparents and grandchildren and expectations between them. The results revealed that majority of the respondents (70%) had fair (acceptable) relationship with their grandchildren and majority of them (57.4%) expect their grandchildren to be with them.

KEY WORDS: Relationship, Grandparents, Grandchildren, Older Persons.

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INTRODUCTION

In traditional joint families grandparents act as a mentor by teaching, sharing their skills and talents, providing advice and listening to their grandchildren. Grandparents are a security blanket. The grandparents feel very happy to be a buddy or playmate with their grandchild. Grandparents endow with maturity, knowledge, stability and unconditional love to the lives of their grandchildren. This type of relationship enhances the mental health of grandparents as well as grandchildren. The industrialization and urbanization have responsible to family disorganization. Grandparents usually have more indulgent relationships with their grandchildren than parents. Studies in variety of cultures suggested that there is a general tendency that adjacent generations normally are tensed and alternate generations are relaxed. For many, the grandparent's role is more pleasurable than the parent's role. The researchers have assessed the changing roles of grandparents in child rearing and its association with their mental health¹. Researcher found that maternal grandparents involvement is more in child rearing and contributed to positive mental health among them than paternal grandparents. The role of grandparent is associated with multiple benefits for grandchildren, it is associated with the grandchildren's well-being, with improved behavior and less aggressive behaviors^{4, 8}. However it seems that not all grandparents who engage in grandchildren's life have the same success, It was found that the family involvement of the maternal grandparents is associated with a decrease of the grandchildren's emotional and behavioral problems⁹. It has been found that close contact, especially through regular care giving, is vital in building the emotional attachment between grandparents and grand children⁶. Due to the increase in women workforce, it has become difficult for the mother to have a work life balance as well as women become dependent to raise their children and the need for extended family comes up. Over the past few decades, the work, culture and shift system have increased the need for grandparents as caretakers. It must also be understood that becoming a caretaker grandparent has a negative impact on the personal, health, economic and their social well being. Grandparents also expect family and social support to lead a healthy living and when they become custodial grandparents they experience lot of psychosocial problems and their physical and mental health deteriorates. In India due to joint family system grandchildren are cared by grandparents extensively but nowadays, grandparents also expect personal space and relaxation as age increases. This study is an attempt to understand the relationship and expectation of grandparents and grandchildren.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It was found that care giving grandparents have higher level of limitations than the non-caregivers in their daily activities. The limitation of grandparent's care giving to their grand children

may be linked to the diabetes and arthritis as well as increased unhealthy behaviour such as diet and lack of exercise². The mutual contributions, relationships and the joint activities between grandparents and grand children were studied. Primary data was collected using interview schedule from 104 young adults in the age group of 13-24 years in Annamalaiputhur village of Tirunelveli district. The results of the study showed that the grandparents contributed to their grandchildren mostly in terms of problem solving, advice and guidance, giving money and material help. Few of the grandchildren have said that there was no contribution from their grandparents because of illness and disability. Affection is high when the grandchildren are young⁵. A study conducted on grandparent care giving challenges to health and wellbeing among the rural African Americans and found that women were posed multiple threats to health and wellbeing². Another study is to analyzed the grandparent-grandchild relationships and older adult's life satisfaction. Cross sectional descriptive study was carried among the 377 older persons. In this research multistage sampling method was adopted⁷. The researcher concluded that grandparent-grandchildren relationships had significantly improved the older person's life satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this study were to find out the socio demographic profile of the respondents, to assess the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren and to find out the expectations of the elderly grandparents from grandchildren. The present study was carried out using descriptive research design and the data was collected for 50 older persons using purposive sampling method. This study was conducted among the rural older persons who had grand children and residing in Appathurai village of Trichy district. A self prepared interview schedule was prepared and it included questions pertaining to socio- demographic details of the respondents, their relationships with their grand children and their expectation from their grand children. The interview schedule consisted of 37 items and the collected data was analyzed using statistical methods.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The socio economic conditions, living arrangements and bonding between the grandparents and grand children is discussed in detailed in this study. This study was done among 50 rural older grandparents and it included 27 females and 23 male. It is found from the study that 40.4 per cent of the respondents were between 60- 65 years of the age, whereas 31.9 per cent were aged between 66-70 years and 27.7 per cent of them were in the age group of 71-80 years.

Gender distribution of older persons showed that 51.1 per cent of the respondents are female and 48.9 per cent of them are male. It is also noteworthy that intimacy with grandparents is more among the granddaughters compared to the grandsons. Thus age and gender play a major role in the

nature of relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. Regarding the educational qualification, equal percent of the respondents (31.9 5% each) are illiterate and educated up to primary level whereas 29.8 per cent had secondary level and 4.3 per cent had study up to 10th standard and very few per cent (2.1 %) them had completed graduation . The present occupational status among the older persons is needed because economic conditions decides their social status and from the study, it is noted that more than half of the respondents (53.2 %) are daily wage earners where as 17 per cent are home makers and 19.1 per cent of them do agriculture and only 4.3 per cent are pensioners and 6.4 per cent of them respondents do business. All the respondents are married and 44.7 per cent of them are living in nuclear family and 17 per cent are residing in joint family, where as 38.1 per cent are alone. Even after having children and grandchildren some are left alone.

Great majority of the respondents are Hindus (87 %) and 8 per cent of them are Christians and the remaining follow Islamic religion. Regarding the economic conditions of the respondents , great majority of them (85.1%) have below Rs 5,000 as their monthly income, whereas 8.5 per cent have an income between Rs 5,001 to 10,000 per month and the remaining per cent have more than Rs.10,000 as monthly income.

Living arrangements explain the familial and non familial relationship of a person with all other persons with whom they live. According to the study, 36.2 per cent of the respondents reside with their children and grand children, whereas 27. 7 per cent of them are living with their spouse and 31.9 per cent of them are living alone and 4.3 per cent are residing with their grand children. It is clear from the study that the older persons also expect personal space at one side and at the other side it is clear that the disintegration of joint family system has made the opportunity to live separately. The care and protection of older persons has become a burden to the families and many young couples use their parents as baby sitters for their children.

Regarding the relationship between grandparents and grand children, it was found that majority of the (70%) respondents had fair (acceptable) relationship, where as 22 per cent of them had poor relationship with their grand children and the level of intimacy has decreased and it has become professional relationship instead of personal relationship. Only 8 per cent of them had good relationship with their grand children and they have been supporting their grand children physically, emotionally and also economically.

From the study, it is clear that relationship and bonding has significant difference and when the respondents were asked about the bonding with their grand children, majority of them (78.7%) have said that they had strong bonding with their grandchildren and it is unconditional and 21.3% of the respondents do not have strong bonding between their grandchildren. This is because the grandchildren live in urban areas and distance places and they visit their grandparents once in a year.

When it comes to expectation of grandparents, nearly majority of the respondents (57.4%) have expectations from grandchildren and 42.6 per cent of them have said that they do not have any expectations from them. When the respondents were asked about their grandchildren's expectations, they have said that their grandchildren (78.7%) also expect financial, physical, household chores and emotional support and 21.3 per cent of grandchildren do not expect their grandparents.

The respondents have expectation in the following areas from their grandchildren like support in daily living activities (44%), daily interaction (44.8%), serve food (40%), help to operate mobiles (49%) and computers (26%), respect (54%), decision making (35.6%), find solution for family problems (37.5%), discuss the school happenings (37.4%), spend time with them (42%), sharing of life events (24.9%), appreciation (45%), emotional support (97.5%), relationship changes (40.4%). The older grandparents have all the above expectations from grandchildren but in reality they mostly spent time be together only in four areas such as physical activities (42.6%), watching television (34%), cooking (14.9%) and outing (36.2%). They also suffer from diabetes (42%), blood pressure (34%), joint pain (56%) and sleeplessness (63%) and it must be understood that they also need rest and nearly half of them (49.5%) are under medication and so they need care by the family too.

Grandparents involve with their grandchildren in various activities and develop their relationship even though the involvement of the grandchildren is frequent or rare. The relationship gets strengthened when the grandchildren express their needs, views and expectations to their grandparents. Nowadays due to technological advancement, the use of digital gadgets has created a gap between the relationship and identity. The relationship and expectations has changed between the grandparents and grandchildren and this is due to economic needs, migration to urban areas, job opportunities, onset of diseases, and disintegration of family system, privacy, identity crisis and increase in women work force. This study has clearly outlined the changing relationship between generations and their expectations.

CONCLUSION

Family interaction is more embedded than the dyadic phenomenon. Family interaction depends upon the type of family system but nowadays most of them migrate to urban areas because they are compelled to have a satisfied and comfortable life for themselves and also to fulfill their children expectations. Gender plays a vital role and it influences the style of grand parenting and in most of the families older women are support providers to their families. The neglected and abused child will have behavioral problems and it is more prevalent in nuclear families than joint families and grandparents will play different roles in the family and they will take care of their grandchildren. Socialization process is also enhanced by their grandparents and also child learns to effectively

participate as a member of social group. Thus it is concluded that elderly grandparents play an important role in grandchildren's life and the joint family system must be encouraged to fulfill and strengthen the life of all the persons in a family.

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