



Unsung Heroines of Indian Society–Potential Human Resource need of Recognition

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Abstract

Old age is nevertheless universally accepted as the last phase of human life and it has to be lived with grace and dignity. The meaning of old age differs from one society to other and the understanding of old age depends on the social, cultural and economic factors. Ageing has been viewed differently by different people whereas to some it means power, authority and wisdom and others consider it as a forced retirement. Old age is often determined by the age of retirement in industrial society. Retirement is the withdrawal from one's occupation, business or office having finished one's active working life. Retirement puts an end to the lifelong habit of hurriedly preparing to one's workplace and attending to day long occupational obligations. Retirement leads to reduced income and also loss of status and power. Retirement has a major impact on the physical and psychological health and functional competence of retired people. In most of the third world countries, women are considered as second class citizens and the situation of aged women is highly vulnerable. Feminization of ageing has become a worldwide trend and demographic data projects that aged women outnumber the aged men in developing nations. This study makes an attempt to analyze the situation of the retired aged women in Madurai district and this study particularly focuses the current life situation of the retired aged women.

Keywords: Aged people, Retirement, Women.

Introduction

Ageing is an inevitable part of our life. The contributions of science and technology, modern medicine, health care and the basic changes in the economic and social ecology have altered the demographic structure of the society. Ageing population is one of the byproducts of the demographic transition. India always consider the aged as "Golden Agers" who are the repositories of experiences and wisdom and were the ones who were vested with the authority for decision making with regard to the economic affairs and social matters, both within the family as well as for the community¹. Aged has always been respected for their vast life experience and for the knowledge they have got through it. But due to the change in the socio-economic and demographic factors, the aged are being marginalized in the society.

Old age is often determined by the age of retirement in industrial society. The age of 60 or 65, roughly equivalent to retirement ages in most developed countries is said to be the beginning of old age. In most of the developing third world nations, chronological time does not provide any value in understanding the concept of old age. Population census Department of India uses the chronological age as the parameter for categorization of the old age groups. Projections beyond 2016 made by United Nations report predicted that India will have 198 million old (60+) in 2030 and 326 million in 2050². World Health Organization defines "ageing as a process of

biological reality which has its own dynamic, largely beyond human control and the perception of ageing depends on the social, cultural and economic factors. Traditionally old age begins at 60 years in India. 60 years has been adopted by the census of India for the purposes of classifying a person as old. This age coincides with the age of retirement in India³.

The term retirement has different understanding like it refers to the event marking departure from employment, a process of separation from employment or a social role⁴. Retirement is mandatory for employees all over the world. The age of retirement is determined on the basis of the life expectancy of the people. Retirement is a prominent event in one's life as many people perceive that work is life and idleness is living death.

Women in India always lead a life with struggle as the culture and tradition of the nation itself expects the women to live according to the standard framed by the society. The elderly women are not much focused in our society and there only very few researches about them. Retirement has both positive and negative impact on the life of women. Some of the major problems faced by retired women are Physical and psychological complaints, Abuse in the family, Death of spouse, Income maintenance, Medical and health issues, Adjustment to changing roles and status, Proper use of leisure time and empty nest syndrome. Retirement socially implies the onset of old age. At the final phase of occupational life, the society expects a man

/ woman to take rest after a long period of service. Loss of job result in problems in both physical health and mental health. The sex ratio of elderly is in favour of women with the sex ratio of 1022:1000⁵.

Review of Literature

“Retirement can be happy”⁶. Sundaram S. suggests that to minimize the hardships faced by the retired in social and economic life by taking measures like conducting courses, intimating matters concerning retirement and creating opportunities for making their life interesting.

“A study of pattern of Adjustment of Retired Working and Non-Working Women”⁷. This study focused on the adjustment pattern of 50 retired working and 50 non-working women from Jaipur and Moradabad cities. The study found that retired working women showed higher scores in vocational and interest aspects than non- working women and also relating to physical health, retired working women scored more than non working women.

Objective: i. To understand the socio demographic status of the respondents. ii. To study the current life situation of the respondents.

Research Design: This study attempts to describe the current life situation of the retired aged women. Hence the research design adopted in this study is descriptive design and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data.

Universe of the study: The universe of the study consists of the pensioners who visited the retired people association between Jan 2015 and March 2015.

Sample of the study: Accidental sampling was adopted and data were collected from 122 respondents.

Operational Definition: Retired Aged women: Women who had completed the age of 60 years and above and had been withdrawn from active working life in Government sector where regular salary is stopped.

Table-1
Sample of the study

S. No.	Socio Demographic factors	No. of Respondents (n= 320)	Percentage
1	Age		
	61-65	38	31.1
	66-70	33	27.0
	71-75	32	26.2
	76-80	13	10.7
	81-85	5	4.1
	86-90	1	.8
2	Marital Status		
	Married	98	80.3
	Unmarried	6	4.9
	Widow	18	14.8
3	Educational Qualification		
	ESLC	6	4.9
	SSLC	24	19.7
	PUC	11	9.0
	Diploma	12	9.8
	UG Degree	32	26.2
	PG Degree	28	23.0
M.Phil	9	7.4	

Age is one of the basic biological and demographic characteristic of a person which is also an indicator which has an important bearing on the physical and psychological wellbeing of the aged. It has been found from the table that 31.1 per cent of the respondents belong to 61-65 years old, 27.0 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 66- 70 years old, 26.2 per cent of the respondents are between 71-75 years old, 10.7 per cent of the respondents are between 76 – 80 years old, 4.1 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 81-85 years old and .8 per cent of the respondents belong to 86-90 years old.

With regard to marital status, majority of the respondents (80.3 per cent) are married and living with spouse, 14.8 per cent of the respondents are widows and a very less number of respondents (4.9 per cent) are unmarried.

Regarding the Educational Qualification of the respondents, more than one fourth of the respondents (26.2) per cent are under graduates, 23.0 per cent of the respondents are post graduates, 19.7 per cent of the respondents have studied Secondary School Leaving Certificate, 9.8 per cent have studied up to Diploma, 9.0 per cent have done Pre University Certificate, 7.4 per cent have studied up to Master of Philosophy and 4.9 per cent of the respondents have studied up to Elementary School Leaving Certificate.

Findings of the Study: i. 31.1 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 61-65 years old and 27.0 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 66- 70 years old. ii. Majority of the respondents are married (80.3 per cent) are married and living with spouse. iii. 26.1 per cent of the respondents are under graduates and 23.0 per cent of the respondents are post graduates. iv. Majority of the respondents (53.3 per cent) have the work experience between 31-40 years and 35.2 of the respondents have the work experience between 21-30 years. v. Relating to current work status, 71.3 per cent are non employed and 28.7 per cent of the respondents are employed. vi. Regarding the source of livelihood, majority of the respondents (87.7 per cent) depend on pension and the remaining respondents depend on house rent, support from son and daughters. vii. Majority of the respondent's (40.2 per cent) overall monthly income is between Rs.30001- Rs.40000 and 31.1 per cent of the respondents income is between Rs.20001-Rs.30000. viii. 71.3 percent of the respondents live in urban area and 28.7 per cent of the respondents live in rural area. ix. Regarding the living arrangement, majority of the respondents (52.5 per cent) live with spouse only and 29.5 per cent of the respondents live with married sons. x. Majority of the respondents (46.7 per cent) feel that the family attitude towards them is respectful and 48.0 per cent of the respondents feel that they are neglected by the family members. xi. Majority of the respondents (31.1 per cent) feel that spouse alone help them in time of need and for 28.7 per cent of the respondents expressed that son alone help them in time of need. xii. 20.5 per cent of the respondents feel that spouse are the main stress relievers and for

19.7 per cent of the respondents feel that Television is the main stress relievers. xiii. 50.0 per cent of the respondents often visit temples and 17.2 of the respondents often visit daughter's house. xiv. Majority of the respondents (43.4 per cent) use own vehicle and public transportation is being made used by 39.3 per cent of the respondents. xv. Relating to ownership of property 63.9 per cent of the respondents have own house.

Suggestions: i. Government should review the National Policy for older persons periodically and special attention should be given to retired aged people. ii. By giving due importance to the demographic transition taking place in our country, The Government has to make required changes in the policies of Retirement. iii. Enough opportunities should be created for the retired aged women where they could contribute to the family and society. iv. The society should avoid the stigma and prejudice towards the aged women and should accept them as they are. v. The aged women should be given due respect where their knowledge and skills should be passed on to the next generation. vi. Retired women play unsung role in the household where efforts have to be taken to recognize their work. vii. Family Counseling centers could be established to minimize the family problems and the strained relationship of the retired aged women with the family. viii. HRD Ministry of India should motivate the educational institutions of our nation to introduce courses on Gerontology and Geriatrics. ix. The family should make the children to co-reside with the grandparents to build better relationship. x. Research could be done on the field of usage of skills and knowledge of the retired aged since they are the potential human resource with enormous experience.

Conclusion

Retired aged women are potential human resource of our society. Social workers, Geriatricians, Psychologists and psychiatrists have to play a prominent role to make the retired aged women to lead a meaningful life after retirement. The researcher has understood the essence of life by hearing and understanding the experience of the retired aged women and realized that it is the responsibility of everyone in the society to respect and learn the life from the retired aged women and to provide a conducive environment to the retired aged women to lead a meaning life at the final phase of the life.

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