

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

10.1 Summary

10.2 Conclusions

10.3 Suggestions for Further Research

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10.1 SUMMARY

Old age has been observed as a developmental phase with its typical problems of adjustment. These problems are likely to influence the behaviour of the old, marking it off from the behaviour of the young persons. Eventually, the young have their stereotypes of the aged. They perceive the aged through these stereotypes and the attitudes of the young toward the aged are seen to be coloured by these stereotypes. Moreover, the aged form a minority group of the total population. This minority group is steadily increasing during the recent years as a result of the advancement in the medical science and a consequential increase in the life span. Thus the problem of attitudes toward a minority group applies to the aged.

The present study has undertaken a two-fold investigation, one of general and the other of specific interest. The general background interest is to probe into the old age problems of adjustment. An attempt is

made to investigate into the nature of these problems. The specific interest of the study is to measure the attitude of the young generation toward the aged. This attitude is seen to be closely related to the cultural background. In some cultures, it seems to be favourable whereas in some others, it does not exhibit that trend. The inference is drawn on the basis of the differential status of the aged in society and in family, from culture to culture. The aged do not always receive the same type of treatment at the hands of the youth in different cultures. In certain cultures, like the Chinese or Japanese, the young display highly favourable attitude toward the aged. Of course, the explicit expression of the attitude reflected in the treatment the old receive at the hands of the young is the only clue for the conjecture. But this by itself is not an adequately objective index of the psychological content of the attitude.

Gerontocracy was prevalent in the Indian society till recently. The aged had a high status in society and family. But a number of social, cultural and technological changes have taken place in the present days. These changes have affected the long preserved status of the old. As a result, gerontology has replaced gerontocracy. The area is comparatively a recent area for research. But interest in it is rapidly increasing and

the dimension of work concerning old age is fast progressing, especially in the United States. Similar work is conspicuously lacking in India. As a result, very little is known about the social and psychological problems of the aged today. No projects are planned for the welfare of the aged, either by society or by government. Wherever they are planned, old age is generally linked up with physical disability or financial dependence. The other normal aspects of old age vitally influencing the social and psychological adjustment of the aged are completely ignored. Interest in such themes is seen to be of a recent origin. Work on "A Study of the Condition and Care of the Aged in Rural Communities as Found in Certain Parts of Gujarat" is being carried out at Shri V.T. Krishnamachari Institute of Rural Development, Samiala, M.S. University of Baroda. More work on similar lines is needed. That is why the need for such investigation was acutely felt by the investigator.

An attempt is made to measure the psychological content of the attitude of the Indian youth toward the aged. The trend of the attitude, which is a reliable index of the treatment the youth give the aged can explain the position of the aged in Indian society. The trend is to be further analysed into its various areas, so that the affect of the attitude concerning each area, may be separately viewed. The study further aims to find

out the relationship between the trend of the attitude and the problems and adjustment of the aged. The hypotheses framed, are based upon the above aims and objectives.

The specific problem of measuring the attitudes of the young toward the aged was studied quantitatively whereas, the background problem about the problems and adjustment of the aged was qualitatively handled. A suitable tool for measuring the attitudes was essential. A scale was constructed for the same purpose, making use of Thurstone's technique of equal-appearing intervals. The scale was divided according to the main areas of adjustment between the young and the old. Provision was also made to measure the behavioural tendencies exclusively. The sample was selected from the Marathi speaking population of the city of Baroda. The variables age, education and sex in 4, 3 and 2 groups respectively, were introduced in deciding the quota of the total sample. Thus $4 \times 3 \times 2 = 24$ cells in all were formed. Totally 831 responses were at hand. They were analysed statistically to test the hypotheses.

Within the families of these 831 subjects, a sample of 160 aged persons was selected for the purpose of the qualitative analysis. These subjects were interviewed. The questions in the interview were connected with the

different areas of adjustment included in the scale of attitude measurement. A selection was made of 22 cases at the two extremes of the adjustment level, 12 being well-adjusted and 10 maladjusted old persons. The intensive study of these cases and of their perception of the attitude of the youth toward them, helped to clarify the effect of the attitude on the adjustment of the aged. The interview responses of the 160 aged subjects were also qualitatively analysed to develop an insight into the nature of old age problems.

10.2 CONCLUSIONS

Based upon both the quantitative as well as qualitative analyses of the data, the following conclusions were arrived at :

1. The attitude of the young toward the aged in Indian society is on the whole adequately favourable. In spite of the modern social and technological changes, the status of the aged is still secure. They are seen to be well accepted by the youth.
2. The different areas of adjustment over which an attitude scale may fall can be independent of one another. As a result, the attitude may express different affects in different areas.

A favourable attitude in general, does not, therefore, mean that it is favourable in all the different areas.

3. It was noted that although the degree of favourability differed from area to area, the attitude was not unfavourable except in a single area of 'appearance, personality and health', and that too, only of two age groups. Thus the grudge the youth have toward the aged, seems to be in connection with their faded and ill-groomed appearance, somewhat orthodox personality and deteriorating health.
4. So far as the areas of 'social status and social relationships' and 'financial status and family relationships' are concerned, the attitude of the youth is observed to be highly favourable. This means that the youth are well accepting the aged concerning their social status and social relationships. Similarly, they accept the financial dependence of the aged as natural and their family relationships with them are smooth.
5. In the area of 'religious and moral problems', the attitude is favourable, but the degree of favourability is slightly less. Thus the youth

do not seem to be thoroughly satisfied with the religious practices and the moral outlook of the old.

6. The valence of the behavioural tendencies taken exclusively tends toward a higher degree of favourability in comparison with the valence of the total attitude. The difference is statistically tested and found to be significant. This obviously shows the influence of the long prevailing cultural norms of Indian society concerning the treatment of the old. This finding is further substantiated by taking an overall view of the frequency of the responses of the young for the different items. The items concerning the treatment of the old either as family members or as members of society are responded in a peculiar manner. The favourable items are more unanimously agreed with. This applies even to the extremely favourable items in some cases. So far as cognitive and other tendencies are concerned, the responses do not exhibit this tendency. The cultural norms and social pressure are the plausible explanations of this observation.

7. Age was found to be a significant determinant of the attitude. In all, 4 age groups were studied. All these age groups ranged from 21 to 40 years at an age interval of 5 years. It was observed that with advancing age the groups displayed an increase in the favourability of the attitude. This was also true for each area treated separately. Thus age of the subject is seen to influence his attitude toward the aged.
8. Education was also found to be exerting influence upon the affect of the attitude. But the influence was in the negative direction. The group with higher education expressed less favourable attitude, in comparison with the groups having lower education. Thus the effect of education upon the attitude toward the aged is seen to be adverse.
9. Sex is seen to be a neutral variable. The effect of sex upon the attitude of the young is insignificant.
10. Income of the subject as a secondary variable was also noted to play a somewhat neutral role.

11. Persons staying in joint families show a less favourable attitude toward the old.
12. A majority of aged were experiencing a positive attitude within the family from younger members. However, they had their own problems of adjustment. Old age is thus viewed as a developmental phase with its special difficulties.
13. There are individual differences in viewing these difficulties among the old. These differences also apply to the felt severity of the problems by the person concerned.
14. In spite of the common problems, some old get along in a smooth and creative manner. They receive all normal satisfactions of life and there seem to be no acute grievances for them.
15. The youth having the old with superior adjustment, staying with them, display highly favourable attitudes toward the old. The adjustment during old age is thus seen to be a potent variable influencing the perception of the young by the old.
16. The attitude of the young itself or its perception by the old influences the level of

adjustment of the old. The aged experiencing an unfavourable attitude from the young or those having a perception of an unfavourable attitude are seen to experience more problems concerning adjustment. On the contrary, the happy, well-adjusted old exhibited a perception of favourable attitude from the young.

10.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The present study was conducted entirely with an urban population, assuming that the social and technological changes affect the urban population more acutely. The assumption can be substantiated if a comparative study of an urban and rural sample is undertaken.
2. The sample of the young whose attitudes were measured was defined in terms of the primary variables (age, education and sex). As a result the effect of the other important variables could not be definitely estimated. A study can be conducted emphasising the other variables, especially, the socio-economic status and the experience of staying in divided or undivided families.
3. Measurement of the attitude of the young toward the aged can be conducted on a wider

scale if simpler tools like the questionnaires are used. Such methods being less time consuming, the attitude of a large number of people can be studied in short time.

4. Research may be undertaken to study the formation and the change in the attitude over a specific time interval.
5. The general trend of the attitude was toward favourability. There were exceptional instances, however, where the attitude expressed was considerably unfavourable. A follow-up study of such cases may prove valuable. An intensive study of a few such cases is likely to explain the sequential relationship between the experience of the young and their attitude toward the old. The various factors shaping the attitude can thus be analysed.
6. The background theme of the present study was found to be stimulating. Initially the study was undertaken with the purpose of tracing the relationship between the attitudes of the youth as experienced by the aged and the adjustment level of them (aged). However, the contact with the old subjects disclosed that besides the attitudes of the young, there are several

other factors influencing the adjustment of the aged. Further research may be undertaken to investigate into the nature of such factors. Little work has so far been conducted in India, concerning the condition of old. As a result, very little is known about the emotional, social and psychological life of the aged.

7. Intensive studies of the old can be carried out with the help of different psychological tests, especially the projective techniques. Such studies can specifically point out the different factors at work in shaping old age adjustment.