Methodology

CHAPTER – III

METHODOLOGY

The method applied in a study is very crucial in deciding the validity and reliability of its findings. This study being scientific one, strict adherence to scientific methodology was observed throughout it. In this chapter the researcher would like to give a detailed account of the methodology followed in the study.

Major Objectives of this Study

The major objectives of this study are:

1. To enquire into the behavioural patterns of the elderly and the way they (behavioural patterns) affect their adaptation to social change.

2. To analyse the perceptions of the elderly on the changing life styles of the community and how they (the perceptions) affect their mental peace and well being.

3. To analyse the agony of the elderly created by the changing physical and social life styles of Kerala community.

4. To analyse the methods of adaptation of the elderly to the changing social and material life patterns of the community.
5. To analyse the perception of the elderly on the future life in the changing community

Hypotheses

This study is aimed at testing the core hypotheses stated below. Subsidiary hypotheses related to these core ones are also formulated and tested. The details of them are given at the appropriate contexts.

1. The behavioural patterns of the elderly are conducive for alleviating the problems created to him/her by the changes in the social situation.

2. The changing patterns of life of the community are not according to the wishes of the elderly and hence they create mental agony to him/her.

3. Declining status and power of the aged in Kerala community compel them to adapt himself/ herself passively to the changing patterns of life.

4. The inevitable passive submission to the unpalatable changes in the non-material life of the community creates agony to the elderly.

5. The induced adaptation to the changing material life creates severe mental stress and agony to the elderly.
6. The changing patterns of life of the community and the inevitability to adjust with the changes create in the elderly pessimism towards future and disinterest in the longevity of life.

Definition of Concepts

The prominent concepts which require explanation for facilitating communication are defined below:

1. The Elderly: In this study the elderly means those people who have attained the age of 65 years and above.

2. Patterns of Life: Social life in every society is structured. However, the structuring is not static. Rather gradual changes are continuously taking place without much known to the members of the group. At times rapid changes occur in the structuring which are perceptible to the societal members. The concept 'patterns of life' means the structured life.

3. Adaptation: Adjustment to the micro level changes mentioned in concept two takes place automatically (without the conscious efforts of the person). However when relatively sudden changes take place in the existing patterns, conscious adjustment of the members to them become necessary. This conscious adjustment is indicated by this concept.
Variables and their Measurement

The major dependent and independent variables considered in this study are described both analytically and empirically below:

Dependent Variables

Adaptation to the relatively quickly changing dimensions of material, socio-cultural, social-psychological and spiritual life are the dependent variables. Adaptation to the changes in the following matters were analysed:

a. Food Habit
b. Housing (Living Arrangement)
c. Dressing
d. Use of modern gadgets
e. Inter generational relationship
f. Emotional vacuum
g. Status of Children in the family.
h. Control over younger generation
i. Status of elderly
j. Spiritual decay
k. Institutionalization of elderly
Independent Variables

The major independent variables are:

a. **Sex**

According to Ann Oakley, who introduced the term into sociology, “Sex” refers to the biological division into male and female. In this study the meaning is adopted.

b. **Age**

Age means the number of years the respondent has completed at the time of interview since his/her birth. According to the age status the respondents were grouped into 65-75 years, 75-85 years, and 85 years and above.

c. **Religious Affiliation**

It is used to denote the respondents links to the larger religious groups, that is, their religious belief and practice. According to the religious affiliation the respondents were categorised into Hindu, Muslim and Christian.

d. **Educational Status**

Educational status refers to the number of years of formal schooling the respondents have had. The respondents were divided into the following categories according to their educational attainment: illiterate, primary educated, secondary educated and college educated.
e. **Income**

In this study income refers to the average monthly income of the household to which the respondent belongs, from all sources (Occupations, Agriculture, Trade etc.) The respondents were grouped into the following categories on the basis of their average monthly income. Low income group (less than Rs.5000), middle income group (Rs.5000 – 10000) and upper income group (Rs.10000 and above).

f. **Socio-Economic Status**

Socio Economics Status refers to a composite of social and economic statuses occupied by the respondent. It was estimated by indexing the following indices as shown below. The indices were accepted by Pareek and Trivedi (1914) and Nair (1979).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Items (Indices)</th>
<th>Score assigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Type of Dwelling Unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single storied house</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Double storied house</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ownership of Dwelling unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rented</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Land owned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 5 cents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 – 10 cents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 – 15 cents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 and above</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Area</td>
<td>(&lt; 50 \text{ cents})</td>
<td>1 &lt;br&gt;50 - 100 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Agricultural implements</td>
<td>Tiller</td>
<td>1 for each tiller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Annual income from agriculture</td>
<td>(&lt; \text{Rs.} 500)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Vehicle and other gadgets owned</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Drinking water facilities</td>
<td>Own pipe system</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Fuel</td>
<td>LPG</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Toilet facilities</td>
<td>Attached to Room</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Educational Status</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total score is divided into three categories, low socio-economic status (score <10), middle socio-economic status (score 10 - 20) and high socio-economic status (score >20).

**g. Type of Residence**

Type of residence refers to social atmosphere constituted by relatives of the respondent in which he/she lives. The type of residence in this study was categorised into

- Residing alone
- Residing with spouse
- Residing with spouse and children
- Residing with other relatives

**h. Place of Residence**

Place of residence means the type of geographical area in which the respondent lives. In this study the places of residence were categorised as rural, sub-urban and urban.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>College</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Occupational Status (Position held last)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No particular occupation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manual labour</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White collar (non-gazetted)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White collar (gazetted)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Population of the Study

Population of the study is constituted by the individuals of Kerala community, who have attained the age of 65 years and above.

Sample and Sample Selection

Sample of the study is constituted by 300 individuals of the population. Selection of the samples involves the following procedures. One Division each of the three corporations, namely, Kozhikode, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram is selected at random from the lists of Divisions available with the respective corporation authorities. Similarly from among the Village Panchayats of three Districts, namely, Kozhikode, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram, one panchayat each is selected at random. From among the wards of each of these selected Panchayat one ward each is selected at random.

A list of persons who are aged 65 or more years is prepared in respect of each of the selected wards / Division with the help of the voters list available with the concerned authorities. From these lists 50 persons each are selected at random and they \(6 \times 50 = 300\) constitute the sample of the study.
**Research Setting**

The empirical part of the research is conducted in the selected areas of the three districts of Kerala, namely, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode. These districts are respectively situated in the southern, central and northern zones of the state. The districts are representatives of the zones and hence the total samples can be considered as constituting a cross section of the population of the study. A detailed description of the study area is given in Chapter IV.

**Data Collection**

The source of primary data was interview of the selected respondents. The prepared interview schedule was administered to the elderly and their patterns of adaptation to the changing life styles were analysed.

In addition to the administration of interview schedule certain cases were also studied in-depth to supplement the data collected through the interviews.

Secondary data was collected from published materials and knowledgeable persons.
Tools of Data Collection

The major tool of data collection for this study was Interview Schedule. The Interview Schedule is given in Appendix - I. The tool was first drafted on the basis of the literature survey, experience survey and consultation with other possible sources of information relating to the topic of research. Later responses of the questions were structured. The schedule was then pre-tested to achieve its suitability to the problem formulated and empirical situation where the study was carried out.

Interviewing the Respondents

The selected respondents were interviewed at their residence after establishing proper rapport with them. The interviews were lengthy and relatively slow as communication with the elderly was not very easy. Care was taken to maintain a free conversational situation. Due to hearing and speaking impairment, in the interviews of certain respondents, assistance of their family members was used. This method was resorted to only where their presence did not spoil the validity and reliability of the data given by the respondents.

Analysis of Data

The collected data was checked for accuracy, edited, coded and fed into a computer. They were then analysed in accordance with the objectives of the
study and hypotheses formulated. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used at the appropriate situations to arrive at the results.

Results were compared with descriptive information collected during interviews. The implications of the results were revealed through proper interpretation. The details of the analyses and interpretations are given in Chapters V – X.