CHAPTER III

Statement of the Problem
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The aim of the thesis is to give a comprehensive exposition of the problem entitled "Grandparents' role - perceptions of three generations". For this study grandparents (grandmother and grandfather), parents (mother and father) and grandchildren were chosen as subjects.

Though we live in a world of changing scenario, the constant reality was that children need the support and guidance of caring adults. This was possible in traditional joint families (Lee, 2000). On the contrary, now-a-days nuclear families were mostly preferred by younger generation, who view only its merits. But at times its demerits out weigh merits. In most of the families both the parents have to go out and work and their children were enrolled in many programmes and economical uncertainties were more than before, certainly the most important support system for parents of today would be the family with grandparents.

Grandparents could be a positive influence in children's lives, through their unconditional love, encouragement and counsel they provide for parents. Today more than any time in the history, grandparents were caring for grandchildren by providing them tremendous wealth of resources. At the same time they enjoy a sheer delight, a sense of fulfillment in serving their family. So it is important to try to understand each other's opinions and respect them for building better relations among generations in bringing the family closer. This in turn is expected to provide peace and a sense of well being for the individuals in the family.
The grandparents play very important role as family watch dogs, nurturers, family historians and companions with their unconditional love and affection. Their psychological and physical states should be healthy to perform the above roles.

As age advances the capacity to perform roles declines as their mobility is lowered and people also become more formal. Perhaps the older cohorts possess a more traditional views when compared to others. As the younger grandparents were more active they tend to have more contact with grandchildren. Thus age of the grandparents' was considered as one of the influencing factors on grandparents perceptions of their grandparental role.

Studies indicate (Chapter II) that there is more interaction with maternal grandmothers than their paternal grandmothers. Similarly, Mathews and Sprey (1985) reported that the grandchildren in their study were most likely to describe their relationships with their maternal grandmothers as close and least likely to describe their relationships with the paternal grandparents as close. Grandmothers appeared to have a somewhat better chance of developing a relationship with their granddaughters than grandfathers, had with their grandsons. The literature on grandparents suggest that very few grandfathers spend much time with their grandchildren, as the elderly men view their grandfather's role as somewhat unimportant. Thus gender of grandparent and type of grandparents were chosen as one of the variables for the present research. Very few studies address the possible impact of various grandchildren on a single grandparent. Obviously, most grandparents start the role with only one grandchild. The
researcher was interested to see the impact of number of grandchildren on grandparents perceptions of grandparents role. Hence it was included as one of the influencing independent variables.

Education was one of the important components which aids in the overall development of the individual and changes their outlook. Education brings positive attitude towards people and their circumstances. Thus educated people had positive perceptions when compared to uneducated ones. To see whether there were any differences between the educated and uneducated on the grandparental role, education was chosen as one of the socio-demographic variables.

In traditional agrarian culture, joint family system was the provider. In extended families, several generations live under one roof, the domestic household includes all the brothers in each generation in a direct line. But, it was generally assumed that joint and extended families became less common in modern times (Goode, 1994). Grandchildren in these families have a good social environment, which serves as a channel for transmission of culture, knowledge, family customs and traditions. Thus, type of family was chosen as one of the variables. The standard of living of the family is determined by the socio-economic status of the family members. One should be economically independent and self-sufficient in order to maintain cordial relations with the family members in such families. Social status of the family also determines the family priorities, traditions and the way of life which was expected to effect the attitude of the family members. To see the perceptual differences between high and low socio-economic status of the families on grandparental role, socio-economic status was chosen as one of the important influencing variables.
There was some evidence to show the gender variations in grandparental perceptions about their relation with grandchildren. Grandfathers feel as if they could be of greater help to their grandsons than to their granddaughters and tend to relate to them more (Cherlin, Frank and Furstenberg, 1986). Further, some studies in the review suggest that granddaughters were not prominent in grandfather-grandchild relationships than grandsons. Subsequently, it was observed that grandsons provided more types of support and more frequent support than do the granddaughters. Interestingly, receipt of support was found to be related to gender. Thus gender of the grandchild was chosen and predicted as an influencing variable on the grandparental perceptions.

Perhaps, there was something significant about ordinal position with grandchildren. Is the first-born grandchild viewed differently by the grandparents from the way a latter-born grandchild is viewed? Generally, the first-born child would grab more attention till the next one comes. The last child in the family being young would be pampered very much. The kind of attention, treatment and association might differ from child to child. Thus, ordinal position was included as one of the socio-demographic variable in the study.

In addition to these it was generally observed that motivational spheres of life contribute a lot in getting individuals life satisfaction, which provides all round capacity with commitment of work to the family. The performance depends upon their perception of these roles. The qualitative aspect of activities were more satisfying to the elderly than the number. Life satisfaction would be associated with the extent of the grandparents involvement in child rearing. The review indicate that, as more satisfaction
was noticed among grandmothers than grandfathers, which might reflect a continuity of earlier and current family experiences. This necessitated inclusion, of life satisfaction of grandparents as one of the independent variables, which was expected to determine the perceptions of grandparents on grandparental role.

Marital adjustment explains the adjustment and cohesion with which the couples live in. Thus determines the psychological status of both the couples which in turn was important in the development of their attitudes and perceptions on other family members. Marital adjustment was the key to the stability in the family which determines the family environment. Thus this was chosen as one of the behavioural variables for parents. Problems in the family of origin had long-lasting consequences for the lives of children. Children from such families develop behavioural problems so family environment definitely influence the children's attitudes, perceptions of others and their all round development, which markedly influenced the academic achievement of the children (MC Neal and Amato, 1998) So the researcher wanted to examine the relationship between the children's perceptions of grandparental role and their academic achievement.

Considering the paucity of information in this area, the present study thus planned, emphasized on perceptions of grandparents role by generation-I as well as perceptions of generation-II and the generation-III would be relevant.

An attempt in the present study was made to investigate the families of three generations and their perceptions on grandparental role in upbringing grandchildren. Keeping this in view, the present study was planned with the following objectives:
To study the perceptions of grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren among generation-I, generation-II and generation-III with regard to socio-demographic variables

To study the influence of selected behavioural variables on the perceptions of generation-I, generation-II and generation-III on grandparental role

The researcher adopted the following definitions for the purposes of the present study

**Grandparents** Grandmother and Grandfather.

**Grandmother** Mother’s mother or father’s mother

**Grandfather** Mother’s father or Father’s father.

**Role**: The set of expectations shared by group members concerning the behaviour exhibited by a person who occupies a given position in the group. For example, the role of a grandparent (Basavanna, 2000).

**Perception**: The process of becoming aware of objects, qualities, or relations by way of sense organs, while sensory content is always present in perception, what is perceived is influenced by set and prior experiences so that perception is more than a passive registration of stimuli impinging on the sense organs. (Basavanna, 2000).

**Three generations**: For the purposes of convenience the sample of grandparents (grandmothers and grandfathers) in the present study was referred to as generation-I, parents (mothers and fathers) as generation-II and grandchildren as generation-III
An exhaustive review of available studies in the literature has facilitated the identification of variables for the present study. Based on the observations made from the review of literature, the following variables were identified for the present study:

The variables and hypotheses of the present research are presented in the following sub-section.

3.1 VARIABLES AND HYPOTHESES

In this section, major variables that have been utilized in the research on grandparenting are reviewed and selected variables influencing the grandparent’s perceptions and hypotheses were presented by the researcher.

3.1.1 Variables

Dependent variable of the present study is perceptions of grandparent’s role and a set of socio-demographic variables viz., age, gender, education, socio-economic status, occupation of parents, family type, type of grandparents, number of grandchildren and birth order of the grandchild were considered as independent variables.

In addition to these socio-demographic variables, the variables which were conceived to influence the quality of relationship between the grandparent and the grandchild and their effect on perceptions of the grandparent’s role were included in the present study. They were: life satisfaction of grandparents, marital adjustment of parents and academic achievement of grandchildren.
3.1.2 HYPOTHESES

To realise the objectives of the present study, some relevant hypotheses were formulated to assess the effect and relationship between dependent and independent variables. Socio-demographic factors play an important role in determining the perceptions of grandparent's role. Keeping this in view, the following hypotheses were formulated to test the relationship between these variables and the perceptions of three generations towards the grandparent's role.

Hypotheses related to dependent variable and socio-demographic variables.

1. Perceptions of grandparents (generation-I) with regard to grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren differ significantly with their age.

2. Gender of the grandparents (generation-I) significantly influence their perceptions towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

3. Perceptions of grandparents (generation-I) towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren differ significantly with their level of education.

4. Perceptions of grandparents (generation-I) towards their role in bringing up grandchildren vary with the type of grandparent.

5. Number of grandchildren in the family significantly influence the grandparents (generation-I) perceptions towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

6. Family type of the grandparents (generation-I) significantly influence their perceptions towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.
7 Socio-economic status of the family significantly influence the perceptions of the grandparents (generation-I) towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

8 Perceptions of grandparents’ role in bringing up grandchildren among parents (generation-II) vary significantly with their age.

9 Gender of the parents (generation-II) significantly influence their perceptions towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

10 Perceptions of parents (generation-II) towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren significantly differ with their level of education.

11 Perceptions of parents (generation-II) towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren significantly vary with their occupation.

12 Family type significantly influence the perceptions of parents (generation-II) towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

13 Perceptions of grandchildren (generation-III) with regard to grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren significantly vary with their age.

14 Gender of grandchildren (generation-III) significantly influence their perceptions towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

15 Educational level of grandchildren (generation-III) significantly influence their perceptions towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

16 Birth order of grandchildren (generation-III) significantly influence their perceptions towards grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.
Hypotheses Related to Dependent Variable and Behavioural Variables

In addition to the above hypotheses, researcher was interested in observing the influence of selected behavioral variables on the perceptions of three generations towards grandparenting. For this purpose, life satisfaction of first generation, marital adjustment of second generation, academic achievement of third generation in relation to their perceptions of grandparents role were selected.

17. Life satisfaction of grandparents (generation-I) significantly influence their perceptions on grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

18. Marital adjustment of parents (generation-II) significantly influence their perceptions on grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

19. Academic achievement of grandchildren (generation-III) significantly influence their perceptions on grandparental role in bringing up grandchildren.

The details of methodology, tools and quantitative procedures employed were described in the next chapter.