CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter portrays the study in retrospect, summary of findings and tenability of hypotheses, important conclusions and suggestions, including suggestion for future research.

6.1 The Study in Retrospect

The present study on adjustment and its correlates in old age in relation to living arrangement is undertaken in the context of changes in demographic scene, family structure and living arrangements. The rapid shift in socio-demographic structure of India has resulted in presenting different types of living arrangement for the elderly. As a result, the aged are beginning to face new problems and challenges of social, familial, economic, emotional, health and psychological adjustments. The review of related research in this area revealed a lacuna in the understanding of the dynamics of adjustment among the aged living in varied home living arrangements. Therefore, a study was designed with the aim of investigating the correlates of adjustment in old age in relation to living arrangement. It also aimed to investigate the effect of counselling intervention with the mal-adjusted elderly.

A factorial cum quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 300 home-living elderly (156 males and 144 females) in the age group 60-79 years from Kottayam and Kozhencherry.
Taluks of Kottayam and Pathanamthitta Districts (Kerala) respectively. The sample covered 100 elderly each from the three living arrangements chosen for the study. The living arrangements were: 1) The elderly living with spouse and children; 2) The elderly living with spouse alone; and 3) The widowed elderly living with children. A three-stage random sampling technique was used to select the sample. For counselling intervention, 37 elderly with low level of adjustment (in any one of the measures) were enlisted through 'self selected sampling'. An individual based eclectic model of counselling approach was used for counselling intervention.

Adjustment was assessed through an Adjustment Inventory developed by Subramanian (1989). Beliefs were measured using three sub-scales, namely, Belief in God, Belief in Religion and Belief in Moral Character given in Mathew Materialism-Spiritualism Scale (Mathew, 1973). Family life satisfaction was measured with the help of Family Life Satisfaction Inventory for the Elderly constructed by the investigator. In addition to this, a schedule for eliciting Socio-Demographic and Background Information was also used. The subjects were approached individually and appointments were fixed in advance for test administration. For counselling intervention, each client was offered 3-5 individual sessions, which spread over two months. After a lapse of a minimum of one month and a maximum of six weeks after counselling intervention, clients were post tested on the two tests: Adjustment Inventory and Family Life Satisfaction Inventory for the Elderly.
The independent variables considered in the study were living arrangement, gender, age, location of residence, income, education, family life satisfaction, belief in God, belief in religion and belief in moral character. The dependent variable, Adjustment, had six measures, namely, general adjustment, home adjustment, social adjustment, emotional adjustment, self-adjustment and health adjustment.

The statistical tests applied for the study were Analysis of Variance (factorial), Least Significant Difference test, and Paired- ‘t’ test. The study examined simultaneously the effect of the independent variables through eight combinations on adjustment. The living arrangement and gender were included in each of the eight combinations to investigate their independent effect on adjustment. For this, a three-way ANOVA was done.

The following section presents the summary of findings of the study in relation to the tenability of hypotheses.

6:2 Summary of Findings and Tenability of Hypotheses

6:2:1 Living Arrangement and the Six Measures of Adjustment

Living arrangement and General adjustment

The study found that living arrangement was significantly related to general adjustment, independently of all the socio-demographic and belief variables. Pair-wise comparison showed that the elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) were better adjusted than those living with spouse alone (LA2), and they in turn were more adjusted than the widowed elderly living with
children (LA3). But the results showed that when the variance due to family life satisfaction is eliminated, living arrangement held no independent effect on general adjustment. Hence the hypothesis (1) that there will be no significant relationship between living arrangement and general adjustment, is rejected, independently of any of the socio-demographic and belief variables. But the hypothesis (1) is confirmed when the variance due to family life satisfaction is controlled. The study also found a significant interaction effect between living arrangement and age on general adjustment when gender is controlled.

**Living arrangement and Home adjustment.**

Living arrangement was found to be significantly related to home adjustment, independently of all the other independent variables. It was found that the elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) and the elderly living with spouse only (LA2) had better home adjustment than the widowed elderly living with children (LA3). It was also observed that the elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) and those living with spouse alone were not significantly different from each other in home adjustment. An important finding noted in this respect is that when the variance due to income or family life satisfaction is eliminated, the elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) showed a higher level of home adjustment than those elderly living with spouse alone (LA2). Nevertheless, the hypothesis (1a) that there will be no significant relationship between living arrangement and home adjustment is rejected.
Living arrangement and Social adjustment

The results showed that living arrangement held an independent relationship with social adjustment, independently of any of the socio-demographic and belief variables. It was found that the elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) were more adjusted than their counterparts in LA2, and these two groups were better adjusted than the widowed group (LA3). However, when the effect due to family life satisfaction is eliminated, living arrangement was found to be not significant. Hence the hypothesis (1b) that there will be no significant relationship between living arrangement and social adjustment, is rejected, independently of any of the socio-demographic variables and beliefs. This hypothesis is confirmed when family life satisfaction is controlled. Moreover, a significant interaction effect was also observed between living arrangement and family life satisfaction on social adjustment.

Living arrangement and Emotional adjustment

The study revealed that living arrangement was significantly related to emotional adjustment, independently of all the other independent variables. The elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) had better emotional adjustment when compared to the other two groups (LA2 and LA3). But the results showed that the elderly of LA2 and LA3 groups were not significantly different from each other in emotional adjustment. Nevertheless, the hypothesis (1c) that there will be no significant relationship between living arrangement and emotional adjustment is rejected. A significant interaction between living arrangement and age on emotional adjustment was also revealed in the study.
Living arrangement and Self-adjustment

The results showed that living arrangement was significantly related to self-adjustment, independently of all the independent variables except family life satisfaction. The elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) were more adjusted as compared to the other two groups (LA2 and LA3). But it was found that the elderly belonging to LA2 and LA3 groups were not significantly different from each other in self-adjustment. An important finding in this regard is that when education or belief in moral character is controlled, a significant difference was found between LA2 and LA3 groups, the former showing higher levels of adjustment than the latter. The hypothesis (1d) that there will be no significant relationship between living arrangement and self-adjustment is rejected when the variance due to socio-demographic variables and beliefs are eliminated, and is confirmed when the variance due to family life satisfaction is eliminated.

Living arrangement and Health adjustment

Living arrangement showed a highly significant relationship with health adjustment, independently of the influence of any of the socio-demographic and belief variables. It was revealed that the elderly living with spouse and children (LA1) were more adjusted than those with spouse only (LA2) and these two groups (LA1 and LA2) showed better adjustment than the widowed group (LA3). Hence the hypothesis (1e) that there will be no significant relationship between living arrangement and health adjustment is rejected when the effect
of socio-demographic or belief variables is eliminated. The same hypothesis is accepted when the variance due to family life satisfaction is eliminated.

6.2.2 Gender and the Six Measures of Adjustment

Gender and General adjustment

The study revealed that gender was significantly related to general adjustment, independently of the effect of any of the independent variables. Male elderly were found to be more adjusted than the female elderly. Hence the hypothesis (2) that there will be no significant relationship between gender and general adjustment is rejected. The results also showed that there was a significant interaction between gender and belief in moral character on general adjustment.

Gender and Home adjustment

The effect of gender on home adjustment was found to be significant when the variance due to living arrangement, age, location of residence, income and beliefs were eliminated. It was found that the male elderly had better adjustment than the female elderly. The result also showed that gender held no significant effect on home adjustment when the variance due to education or family life satisfaction is eliminated. Therefore, the hypothesis (2a) that there will be no significant relationship between gender and home adjustment is rejected, independently of the effect of other independent variables except education and family life satisfaction. The hypothesis is
confirmed when the variance due to education or family life satisfaction is eliminated.

**Gender and Social adjustment**

The analysis revealed that gender was significantly related to social adjustment, independently of the effect of any of the socio-demographic variables, belief in God and belief in religion. It was found that the male elderly had better social adjustment than the female elderly. But the relationship between gender and social adjustment ceased to be significant when the variance due to family life satisfaction or belief in moral character was controlled. Thus on the one hand, the hypothesis (2b) that there will be no significant relationship between gender and social adjustment is rejected when the variance due to socio-demographic variables, belief in God and belief in religion are eliminated. On the other hand, it is confirmed when the variance due to family life satisfaction or belief in moral character is eliminated. It was also found that there was a significant interaction between gender and location of residence as well as gender and belief in moral character on social adjustment.

**Gender and Emotional adjustment**

It was found that gender was significantly related to emotional adjustment, independently of the variance due to living arrangement, age, and location of residence, and belief in God. Males were found to be more adjusted than females. Hence the hypothesis (2 c) that there will be no significant relationship between gender and emotional adjustment is not found to be
proved when the variance due to living arrangement, age, location of residence and belief in God are eliminated. The hypothesis is accepted when income, education, family life satisfaction, belief in religion and belief in moral character are controlled.

**Gender and Self-adjustment**

It was observed that gender had an independent effect on self-adjustment, independently of the influence of any of the independent variables except education. The results showed that the male elderly had better self-adjustment than the female elderly. Thus the hypothesis (2 d) that there will be no significant relationship between gender and self-adjustment is accepted only when the effect due to education is controlled. But the same hypothesis is rejected when the variance due to other independent variables is eliminated.

**Gender and Health adjustment**

Gender was found to be significantly related to health adjustment, independently of the influence due to any of the independent variables except education and belief in moral character. Males had better health adjustment than females. Thus the hypothesis (2e) that there will be no significant relationship between gender and health adjustment is rejected, independently of the variance due to any of the independent variables except education and belief in moral character. But the hypothesis is confirmed when the effect due to education or belief in moral character is eliminated. A significant interaction effect was also observed between gender and moral character on health adjustment.
6.2.3 Age and the Six Measures of Adjustment

The analysis showed that age was not significantly related to any of the six measures of adjustment when the variance due to living arrangement and gender are eliminated. Hence the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between age and general adjustment (3); age and home adjustment (3a); age and social adjustment (3b); age and emotional adjustment (3c); age and self-adjustment (3d); and age and health adjustment (3e) are rejected.

6.2.4 Location of Residence and the Six Measures of Adjustment

The results revealed that location of residence was significantly related to general, home, emotional and self-adjustments. This relationship is held significant independently of the effect due to living arrangement and gender. Hence the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between location of residence and general adjustment (4); location of residence and home adjustment (4a); location of residence and emotional adjustment (4c); and location of residence and self adjustment (Hypothesis 4d) are rejected. It was found that the urban elderly had higher levels of adjustment in the above four measures of adjustment as compared to the rural elderly. The results also showed that location of residence was not significantly related to social and health adjustments. Therefore, the Hypotheses related to location of residence and social adjustment (4b), and location of residence and health adjustment (4e) are confirmed.
6.2.5 Income and the Six Measures of Adjustment

The relationship between income and the six measures of adjustment was found to be highly significant even when the effects due to living arrangement and gender were eliminated. The results revealed that the higher the level of income, the better the adjustment of the elderly. Hence the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between income and general adjustment (5); income and home adjustment (5a); income and social adjustment (5b); income and emotional adjustment (5c); income and self-adjustment (5d); and income and health adjustment (5e) are rejected.

6.2.6 Education and the Six Measures of Adjustment

Education had a highly significant relationship with all the six measures of adjustment even when the variance due to living arrangement and gender were eliminated. On the whole, the results showed that the higher the level of education, the better the adjustment of the elderly. Hence the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between education and general adjustment (6); education and home adjustment (6a); education and social adjustment (6b); education and emotional adjustment (6c); education and self-adjustment (6d) and education and health adjustment (6e) are not proved.

6.2.7 Family Life Satisfaction and the Six Measures of Adjustment

Family life satisfaction showed a highly significant relationship with all the six measures of adjustment. This relationship is held independently of the effect due to living arrangement and gender. It was revealed that the higher the
level of family life satisfaction, the better the adjustment. Hence the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between family life satisfaction and general adjustment (7); family life satisfaction and home adjustment (7a); family life satisfaction and social adjustment (7b); family life satisfaction and emotional adjustment (7c); family life satisfaction and self adjustment (7d) and family life satisfaction and health adjustment (7e) are rejected.

6.2.8 Beliefs and the Six Measures of Adjustment

Belief in God

Belief in God was not significantly related to any of the six measures of adjustment when the effects due to living arrangement and gender were eliminated. Hence the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between belief in God and general adjustment (8); belief in God and home adjustment (8a); belief in God and social adjustment (8b); belief in God and emotional adjustment (8c); belief in God and self adjustment (8d); and belief in God and health adjustment (8e) are confirmed.

Belief in Religion

Belief in religion was found to be significantly related to general, emotional and health adjustments, independently of the influence of living arrangement and gender. The results revealed that the elderly having lower levels of belief in religion were more adjusted than those having higher levels of belief in religion. Therefore, the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between belief in religion and general adjustment (9); belief in
religion and emotional adjustment (9c); and belief in religion and health adjustment (9e) are rejected. The results also revealed that the hypotheses related to home adjustment (9a); social adjustment (9b); and self-adjustment (9d) are confirmed on the basis of the finding that belief in religion was not significantly related to these three measures of adjustment.

Belief in Moral Character

It was revealed that belief in moral character was significantly related to all the six measures of adjustment, independently of the influence due to living arrangement and gender. In general, it was found that the higher the level of belief in moral character, the lower is the adjustment. Thus the hypotheses that there will be no significant relationship between belief in moral character and general adjustment (10); belief in moral character and home adjustment (10a); belief in moral character and social adjustment (10b); belief in moral character and emotional adjustment (10c); belief in moral character and self adjustment (10d) and belief in moral character and health adjustment (10e) are rejected.

6.2.9 Effect of Counselling Intervention on the Elderly

The results revealed that counselling intervention had a highly significant effect on all the six measures of adjustment except in the matter of health. The results also showed a highly significant increase in all the four measures of family life satisfaction. Hence the hypothesis that counselling intervention will not have a significant effect on the six measures of adjustment
and the four measures of family life satisfaction of the elderly is rejected (Hypothesis 11) except in relation to health adjustment.

6.3 Observations in relation to Counselling the Elderly

Besides the findings described above, the following observations during the counselling sessions also contribute to satisfy the objective of understanding the counselling needs of the elderly. The observations have been categorized under appropriate headings.

1. Needs in relation to home adjustment and family life satisfaction
   Problems in spouse relationship, particularly in relation to mutual sharing and sexual intimacy.
   Negative self-perception in relation to losing of status and freedom at home.
   Problems due to exaggerated expectations from children.
   Guilt and hurt feelings related to past experiences in family life.

2. Needs in relation to social adjustment
   Negative self-perception in relation to status in society.
   Withdrawal from involvement in society, particularly among the widowed group.

3. Needs in relation to emotional and self adjustment
   Anxiety of spouse’s and one’s own death.
   Worry about finance and unfinished tasks.
   Grief related to bereavement and extended separation of children.
4. Needs in relation to health adjustment

   Problems of self-acceptance of aging process.
   Problems due to pre-occupation with diseases.

6.4 Important Conclusions

   The following are the important conclusions that emerged from the present study:

1. Living arrangement has a unique role in facilitating better adjustment among the elderly. In general, the elderly living with spouse and children are the most adjusted followed by those living with spouse alone. The widowed elderly living with children alone are the least adjusted group. Nevertheless, at comparable levels of family life satisfaction, no significant difference exists among the living arrangement groups with regard to general, social and health adjustments. On the whole, it can be concluded that the presence of spouse and children or at least the presence of spouse is a determining factor for the better adjustment of the elderly.

2. Young old (60-69 years) and the advanced old (70-79 years) are not significantly different from each other in any of the six measures of adjustment. Therefore, age per se does not facilitate better adjustment among the elderly within this age group.

3. Gender has a significant impact on the adjustment of the elderly. In general, male elderly are more adjusted than the female elderly. However, this difference was not found to be significant with regard to:
a) Emotional adjustment when the effect due to income or belief in religion is eliminated.

b) Home, emotional, self and health adjustments when the effect due to education is eliminated.

c) Home, social and emotional adjustments when the variance due to family life satisfaction is eliminated.

d) Social, emotional and health adjustments when the variance due to belief in moral character is eliminated.

4. Location of residence has an important influence on general, home, emotional and self-adjustments; showing that the urban elderly are more adjusted than the rural elderly.

5. Better education contributes to higher levels of adjustment in all the measures of adjustment.

6. Higher levels of family income contribute to greater adjustment in all the measures of adjustment.

7. Family life satisfaction exerts a great influence on all the measures of adjustment.

8. Belief in God does not make significant difference in any of the measures of adjustment.

9. Belief in religion has a significant relationship with all the measures of adjustment except social and self-adjustments; showing that higher levels of...
belief in religion lead to lower levels of general, emotional and health adjustments.

10. Belief in moral character has a significant relationship with all the measures of adjustment; showing a negative relationship that higher levels of belief in moral character resulting in lower levels of adjustment.

11. There is an immense scope for counselling intervention with the elderly. A considerable level of improvement in adjustment and family life satisfaction can be made in the elderly through counselling, except in health adjustment. Hence as against the common notion, it can be stated that the elderly as a group has great potential for change and growth.

To sum up this section, it may thus be concluded that the correlates that positively relate to adjustment in old age are living arrangement, gender, location of residence, income, education and family life satisfaction. The correlates that negatively relate to adjustment are belief in religion and belief in moral character. However, location of residence is not a determinant correlate for social and health adjustments. Belief in religion is not a significant correlate for home, social and self-adjustments. Age and belief in God are not significant correlates for any of the six measures of adjustment.

6.5 Suggestions

The study has arrived at some relevant factors that are associated with adjustment in old age. In the light of the findings, the following suggestions are made to mitigate the problems of adjustment among the elderly.
Awareness programme

Since the finding reveals that the presence of immediate family and satisfaction derived out of family life are important for the well-being of the aged in India, any kind of programme and policy for the elderly should be focussed on fostering and strengthening the familial bond. To achieve this, younger members are to be encouraged to stay at least close to their parents. Efforts must be taken to orient family members to the various needs of the elderly so as not to make them feel neglected. The children who stay away from their parents should be rendered proper guidance to maintain regular contact so as to deepen their relationships with their parents. Similarly, the elderly also should be oriented towards their changing role in the modern family. Mass media are to be utilized for extending programmes to conscientise the public about the needs of the aged. Policy for the welfare of the aged should be formulated in line with our traditional culture and values. This has to be made possible by viewing family as the foundation for ‘elder care’ with community services as a supplement and institutional care as an exception.

Priority area for care.

The present study brought about a broader understanding of the impact of living arrangement on the adjustment of the elderly. The findings suggest that the widowed elderly, as a special group must get priority in the welfare schemes and policies for the elderly. Intervention programmes must be aimed at this particular group to manage their widowhood experience creatively.
Curriculum revision.

Since the tradition of respecting the elderly is fast disappearing, children are to be conscientised to develop a positive attitude towards older generation. This can be made possible by incorporating the subjects related to gerontology from the school level itself. Gerontology and geriatrics have to be included in the syllabus of medical graduates, and paramedical students. Psychosocial gerontology should form a part of the curriculum of social science and behavioural science students.

Gerontological research

Scientific research on aging and its related issues must be encouraged in all the states of India. Discussions, debates, seminars and publications on aging issues have to be encouraged. In each university a chair on gerontology or geriatrics may be instituted. It can be similar to the Institute of Aging at the Venkateswara University, Tirupathi, Andra Pradesh.

Gerontological services

There is an immense scope for establishing gerontological/geriatric service centers utilizing the existing infrastructure of Panchayats and Municipalityies. These centers could make the services of lawyers, doctors, and counsellors available to the elderly, particularly to the weaker section of the elderly. The role of voluntary organization is important in starting gerontological services in different parts of the country. Starting of day care centers for the elderly at the local level can be a rich resource to take care of them. Here they
can receive social contacts, remunerative work opportunities, basic health care, nutritional support, recreational facilities and gerontological counselling according to the individual needs. For all these, Government and other funding agencies should provide financial assistance to the voluntary associations.

**Neighbourhood ties (NEBT)**

It is suggested that as an adjunct to the family care, steps should also be taken by the Panchayats and Municipalities to organize ward level Neighborhood ties (NEBT) including all people irrespective of caste or religion. Youngsters, middle-aged and aged will be the members of NEBT. Each member of this group can be a ‘helper’ as well as ‘the helped’. The youth wing can be a resource to help those elderly in need of assistance with household chores. Each member can be encouraged to visit the needy elderly, especially the lonely and those with restricted mobility. The Neighborhood tie, as a supportive network can provide timely help to the elderly who are badly in need of emotional, social and physical support.

**Special enrichment groups**

As a preventive measure to prepare people for healthy old age, special groups, such as ‘middle aged parents group’, ‘marriage enrichment group’ can be started in local towns and villages. These groups can meet periodically, at least once in three months. Special periodical talks in relation to marriage enrichment could be arranged. These groups allow couples to explore new dimensions of their lives in a supervised setting with a support that is made up of committed couples who trust each other.
Provision of economic security

One of the important steps that the Government can take is regarding the economic security of the aged. Plans are to be worked out so that all the non-pensioners can receive old age pension. At State level there is a need to start financial support programmes for the aged.

Gerontological counselling training programme

Training programmes in gerontological counselling should be opened to prepare personnel to care for the aged. The training could be given at geriatric counselling centers attached to hospitals or day care centers. Counselling should be extended not only to the needy aged members but also to the caregivers of the elderly. Peer counselling training programme is also to be made available in these centers. The establishment of a ‘National Institute for the Elderly’ will be useful to formulate appropriate ‘National Policy’ for the well-being of the elderly. Such an Institute would go a long way in the realization of the above discussed needs and possibilities.

6:6 Suggestions for Future Research

1) A study on examining the relationship between the attitude of younger family members towards the aged and the adjustment of the elderly will be worthwhile for a deeper understanding of the problems of adjustment in relation to living arrangement.

2) A similar study including the elderly hailing from other types of living arrangement, such as those elderly living alone, or those living with relatives
other than children would further enrich the quality of the research in this area.

3) A study on all the elderly beyond sixty years of age would be more helpful in generalizing the findings with regard to age and adjustment.

4) An intervention study with the inclusion of personality variables, such as self-esteem, self-acceptance, integrity, locus of control will have a greater scope for analyzing the specific outcomes due to counselling in the elderly.

5) Though an individual based counselling has its own merits, research is required to study the quality of counselling while using a systemic approach, including the whole family.

6) The effect of beliefs on adjustment, need to be studied with tools that elicit the deeper processes. This will help the elderly to be aware of the resources in their beliefs, which in turn help them in the counselling process.

The present research, to the researcher's knowledge, is the first ever-reported intervention study of its kind, among the elderly, in the varied home-living arrangements in India. It is hoped that the findings of the present study would contribute its mite to the quality and welfare of its target population: the aged in varied home living arrangements.