Chapter – 5

Case Studies of the Elderly
CASE STUDIES OF THE ELDERLY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt is made to discuss the in-depth interviews in the form of case studies and present the same in a lucid manner. As stated earlier (see Methodology chapter), in this study, all 9 in-depth interviews have been conducted among the elderly men and women. The respondents taken for the case study belong to rural background of Puducherry where majority belong to backward caste illiterate category. The case studies are based on the in-depth interview which has been collected through interview schedules. The major focus of the in-depth interviews among the elderly is on the background characteristics, situations under which the elderly’ living arrangements have been changed; persons from whom the elderly receive support for emotional, physical and financial aspects. All this information is received on behalf of elderly respondents who co-reside with children and/or others. In order to have an overall glimpse of the men and women elderly who have been considered for case studies, their pivotal background profile are given in a condensed format in Tables 5.1. In this chapter the case studies of elderly are categorised from the gender perspective, where male elderly cases are presented first and then female elderly study.

Case Study 1: Elderly Married Man Staying Alone

Sakkaravarthi is educated till primary school. He is a scheduled caste old man of 70 years. He is working earlier in agriculture to maintain a sustainable livelihood but now he is not working. He has a family consists of wife and 3 children, where 2 are daughters and one is a son. After giving birth to the last daughter the respondent started to have love affairs with another women and stay with the lady in a rented house nearby. Taking the small children, the respondent’s wife without any income continued to lead her life in lot pain and desertion. After the respondent become old, that lady cheated the old man by taking his property and now the respondent feels guilty of his mistakes of leaving the good wife and going to another lady for no reason other than attraction.
Therefore, the respondent leads a life of loneliness in a hut with no housing facilities. He doesn’t keep any contact with the lady but he often comes to the home of his wife and children to meet children. The wife after being deserted from the husband doesn’t keep any contact with the old man and doesn’t speak with him when he comes home to meet children. The respondent gets financial and emotional support from his own children who take good care of him. He suffers from dental problem and the son takes all responsibilities of health problems of the respondent by providing financial as well as emotional support. But the old man has done mistake by going to another lady and leaving his children and wife in pain. So the children sometimes make abusive behaviour, and also he is even not respected in important familial matters although he attends the familial ceremonies. The respondent doesn’t do any domestic chores and limits his interaction to the children only and not his wife and the other lady. The respondent says “I feel guilty for my mistake as out of attraction, I went to stay with another lady leaving behind my good wife and children alone. Also the lady with whom I stayed cheated me and taken all my property and now I want to be with my old family. My wife doesn’t accept me back but my children have forgiven me and keeping good contact with me”. The old man now doesn’t want to go to any old age homes. He wants to stay alone and meet the children everyday who stays nearby with his wife. None of the children are married. He often depends on children for food so he comes to their home almost three times a day. The old man doesn’t expect anything from Government just he wants to overcome his guilt and waits for God to do justice of forgiving his mistakes.

Case Study 2: Elderly Man Staying with Son’s Family

Arumugam, is an old man of 72 years who is illiterate and belong to most backward caste. He is a widower since 3 years. He has 2 sons and 2 daughters. Currently, he is staying with married son’s family with another unmarried son. Both the daughters are married and stay with husband and occasionally come to see him. The respondent is not working at present and receives Rs.1000 from Government Old Age Pension and other basic expenses given to him by his son. The house in which he stays with the son is owned by him with good housing facilities. Although the house has good
facilities but old man suffers as he is not provided with a place to sleep/take rest and he sleeps/takes rest in veranda. However, his financial condition is good.

As per the matter of family situations, the respondent is seen to be participating in domestic chores, familial matters and familial disputes. But he is seen not to participate in familial ceremonies. He faces familial abuse from the son and daughter-in-law as when he drank children beaten the respondent. There is no one to give emotional support to the elderly, only few things are satisfied by daughter. Moreover, since 3 years he suffers from arthritis, back pain, dental problems for which he depends upon himself for physical and financial support. At the end of his life he expects his children should do his death ceremonies rituals perfectly. And he expects from Government an enhancement of Old Age Pension. He prefers to stay in old age home to be happy in his life. He doesn’t know any elderly welfare measure from Government and NGOs.

Case study 3: Elderly Man Staying with Last Son’s Family

Rajangam, 76 years old scheduled caste widower is illiterate and not working. He was a coolie earlier who earned sufficient to survive the family, consisting of 3 male children and 2 female children. His wife died 6 years before. All the children are married and now he stays in a hut with last son’s family. The respondent home is owned by him and it has very poor housing facilities. He stays with the last son, daughter-in-law and grand children. The son earns Rs.6000 a month and is a private company worker. The respondent does not have good relationship with the other 2 sons and 2 daughters because of quarrel on distribution of parental ancestry property. However, the two daughters sometimes come to see the old man but the sons never.

The old man helps the daughter-in-law and son in whose home he stays. He does the cleaning of house/surroundings and fetching water. But still he is not happy because the daughter-in-law at times makes abusive behaviour towards the old man if he does any mistake in house work. The son always takes support of his wife and humiliates the old man. The grand children however, have a good cordial relationship with the old man.
Because the son’s family does not respect him, the old man is seen not to participate in familial ceremonies, important family matters and family disputes.

Coming back to the financial situation, it is seen that the old man’s condition is bad as he gets only Rs.1000 as Government Old Age Pension and least money from son with whom he stays and no money from any other children. He gets emotional support from Kumar and Kanmani who are the grand children aged 16 and 18 years respectively. They are always at his service and ready to listen his problem, help him at the time of crisis and share happiness. The man suffers from blood pressure, arthritis and need personal assistance in day-to-day life which is not satisfied by any family members hence, he does all alone.

He doesn’t get any emotional, physical and financial support from the rest of the children of whom two are daughters and two are sons. Therefore, the elderly tells “the son with whom I am staying now is my fate because I don’t have anyone to support me in my life. My wife also left me and went to God so I waiting for God to call me as I am suffering here”. He doesn’t want to go old age home as he fears that society may criticize him. He expects geriatric facility and free medical insurance from Government. From this case study we can see that after the death of spouse, the old man suffered a lot emotionally and things like land and property makes children to leave the aged parents unattended and pitiable situation.

Case study 4: Elderly Married Man Staying with Brother’s Son’s Family

Subrayan is an educated old man of backward community aged 73 years. He was working as a Government servant as Group 4 employee. He is educated till middle school and has 4 children of whom all are sons and all are married. He has his ancestral property and own home with a good housing facilities. Earlier he was staying alone with his wife but after retirement he wanted to stay with his children. So he called all the children who are married and staying with their wives and children very far. All of them came to keep their parents with them but all had same opinion that “father and mother we all want to stay with you and get your care so for six months father will stay with first
son and mother will stay with second son. After 6 month father will come to third son and mother will come to fourth son. By that we all can keep you for 6 months and get care”. The respondent agrees to that and decides to stay with first son where he was happy for one month but later faced humiliation. In the process, both the parents faced humiliation. The respondent and his wife both didn’t like to stay with their own children because they were making them to do household work and abuse them, targeting only to their ancestral property.

Therefore, the respondent is currently staying with his brother’s son whom he had given financial support for education. He is staying with the brother’s son, daughter-in-law and grand children. The respondent is very happy here since last 6 months as he is staying and getting good care and respect from the brother’s son family. The son is grateful to the respondent being a great financial support for his education and now he is a good salaried, financial sound Government employee.

The respondent is taking an important role in domestic chores and familial ceremonies. He is highly respected in familial important decisions and disputes resolving. He doesn’t have any cordial relationship with any of his own children but shares a good cordial relation with this family with whom he staying specially the grand children. The grand children aged 16 and 18 age have become a good emotional support for him as they are always ready to listen to his problems, help him in crisis and spend more time.

Financially, the respondent is not much dependent as he gets his retirement pension from Government job of Rs.3000 and spouse received Old Age Pension of Rs.1000 from Government. The old man has only minor health problems like back pain and arthritis where his brother’s son spend money for treatment. Expect these problem otherwise old men considered healthy only. The respondent telling “my own sons are bad as they target my property only, they do not give me respect and my wife also faced the same. we both suffered a lot humiliation when we stayed with them. So I left the home and my current home where I am staying is my real son. I will give all my property to him. He takes care of me and my wife as own parents. We are lucky to have a son and
daughter-in-law like this”. He doesn’t want to go to old age home and he is aware of some Government schemes of elderly. He doesn’t expect anything from Government. He wants to spend the last days of his life happily with his brother’s son home.

**Case Study 5: Elderly Widowed Woman Staying with Younger Unmarried Son**

Krishnaveni is aged 63 years, widowed elderly and belong to scheduled caste. She is an illiterate woman, not working, only receiving Old Age Pension. She has 3 sons and 2 daughters. Two sons and two daughters got married. Son is working as a coolie and getting Rs.6000 per month. Currently, the elderly person lives with younger unmarried son in a hut where there is no proper housing facilities. She alone does the cooking, shopping and cleaning of home. She is in a good financial situation.

Apart from economic, in terms of her social approach, the old widow shares a cordial relationship with family members specially son, daughter and son-in-law. She participates in all familial ceremonies but however, she is not consulted in important family matters and disputes. She is lucky enough for not to get abusive behaviour from any of the family members. Therefore, it is seen that children although not staying with her, provide good support to her. The daughter with whom she resides plays an important role in providing emotional support to her by listening to her problems, supporting in crisis situation. Son provides proper care and support in times of need so in future she likes to stay with son only. Son also extends emotional support, in addition to some monetary help. She says “staying with the un-married son gives me more happiness and through such process I am trying to fulfill my responsibility of taking care of the un-married son”.

The old woman had been suffering from arthritis, back pain and general weakness since 2 years. She receives support for her health care from the daughter and son where, the daughter accompanies her to hospital and son provides money for treatment. She doesn’t need any personal assistance for everyday activities and considers herself to have fairly alright in terms of health. The widowed respondent expects some geriatric facility and medical insurance help from Government for older people. She
does not have much idea about the Government’s welfare schemes available for the elderly. She is satisfied with the way of life she leads at present and happy with unmarried son’s care and support. She, however, wants her son, who lives in the same house, to be married soon. Finally, she says that she would like to live with son’s family.

Case Study 6: Elderly Widowed Woman who Lives Alone by Cooking Separately next to her Youngest Daughter

Sangunthala, a 67 years old forward caste widow, has three married children. She is educated upto primary level. Among three children one of them is male and two are female. All are married and living in independent families. Till her husband’s death she was living with him separately. After her husband’s death, about 3 years back, all assets are equally distributed into five shares of which four for the children and one for herself. In this process, the elderly women started to live alone in a portion of her own house, in which daughter too is living with her family. The old woman cooks for herself with an independent different kitchen. She is getting some rental property too as a regular income, besides the husband’s savings. She has all the household facilities like separate bathroom, toilet, kitchen, etc. Her sons are also living in different streets in the same area. Both the sons are doing business. Respondent has mutual relationship with her all children. If she calls her sons over phone that is enough, either of the son(s) will come and pick her up to his house by car. She does all her personal works without others support and economically she is not dependent on any of her children.

She receives emotional support from almost all the children. Physically, she manages to cook for herself and carry out all domestic chores. After spending her time in household work and personal work, she spends leisure time in watching television and in helping her youngest daughter. She said “it has become habitual for me to live alone, so that I don’t want to be a burden to any one and not disturb their privacy. Moreover, my husband has kept for me some savings and regular income, which is more than sufficient for my day-to-day expenses. I am very much satisfied with my present way of life”. In case of emergencies, especially health related problems, my second son and last daughter shall extend full support. She is suffering from multiple health problems like blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis and general weakness and thereby, she feels unhealthy.
Due to arthritis she may not be able to walk long distance. In the case of heavy knee pain her daughter would help the old woman physically by applying some pain killing oil, assist her to walk and take her to hospital. The elderly woman needs care and support from the daughter for boarding bus and train while travelling long distances. She takes regular treatment through private clinic with daughter’s help. In her opinion during old age living with son’s family would be better, as it is customary in our society. At the same time, if one has brought up the daughter well, she would be more helpful in old age than a son. She is aware of old age home and she feels such homes are meant for destitute. She said, “For me, joining an old age home does not arise because my children are very affectionate for me and helpful”. If the Government wants to help the elderly persons, it is better to meet their health needs and she also expects some concession in medical treatment for the elderly.

Caste Study 7: Elderly Widowed Woman Staying with Grandson’s Family

A 76 years old widowed women, Rajam is living with her grandson’s family. Rajam is an illiterate widow belonging to backward caste. She has one son and one daughter who are staying very far so she resides with the grandson’s family. She owns a house with good home facility and she gets her Government old age pension of thousand rupees per month. She maintains a good relationship with her own son’s family and daughter’s family but chooses to co-reside with grandson’s family for the sake of distance of housing. She also takes part in the family by performing domestic chores like shopping and cleaning house/surroundings. Economically, she perceived her financial situation as bad but socially, she perceives that in actual she participates in the familial ceremonies and respected in familial matters. Nevertheless, at times she is verbally abused sometime. The grandson with whom she stays also plays a good role where she listens to the problems of the respondent, providing more emotional support and in future the respondent likes to spend her life with the grandson itself.

She is of the opinion that grandson provides her good physical support and health services to her where, grandson provides financial assistance for health. Like any another elderly woman she has common diseases like blood pressure, arthritis, back pain
and general weakness. So, the present health status is fairly alright. She doesn’t depend upon others for day-to-day activities but it is seen sometimes she requires help for get out of the bed, going to toilet and boarding bus. And finally, she doesn’t want to go to old age homes as the grandson gives good care and support. However, she is not aware of other old age welfare services.

**Case Study 8: Elderly Widowed Woman Staying Alone and in Pitiable Condition**

Veerammal is a 70 years old illiterate widow who belongs to most backward caste. She is sustaining her life in agriculture but at later stage when she become old she stopped that and she is selling fried gram dol/chenna dol from which she gets 500 rupees and her other source of income is Government Old Age Pension of Rs.1000. she is staying alone and she leads a poor financial situation where she manages her expenses on her own and sometime selling household things. As per her familial relationship is concerned she has five children one son and four daughters. Son left her alone and stays with his wife.

The old respondent is not respected in familial matters, familial disputes and also familial ceremonies. She has a rare interaction with the children daughter, in-laws and grand children. But as she is staying alone she does not get any chance of being abused by family members. Matters related to her emotional support are fulfilled by her alone. The respondent has arthritis and dental problem since more than 5 years for which her friends/others helping her physically at par her own expenses. Rarely her family members also provide her medicine. However, she doesn’t expect anything from family and Government. She is not aware of old age homes and other welfare measure of elderly provided to her by Government.

**Case Study 9: Elderly Married Women Staying Happily with Spouse**

Anjalatchi, 67 years old illiterate, scheduled caste women stays with husband in a hut. She has a very bad financial status with no housing facilities. She was 6 children 4 male and 2 female but all are far. However, one son stays near but he never comes to see her. She doesn’t prefer to stay with son(s) as they all fought for property and went far
taking their wife along with them. So, this old couple is alone in life where they do not get any financial help from children even if in hospital treatment. The respondent is not permitted in any familial ceremony and is not respected or concerned in familial matters. She shares a good cordial relationship only with husband. She doesn’t share any familial interaction with son and daughter and in the process do not face any abusive behaviour as she doesn’t stay with them at all. She is lucky enough to have a good life partner who plays a positive role in her life by giving her care and support in times of need and listens to her problems, shares happiness and prosperity.

In her life children do not provide any familial support. She has arthritis, back pain, weakness and neck pain. She perceives her health condition is healthy and she doesn’t require personal assistance in day-to-day activities. She makes her personal opinion about her family by telling that she doesn’t expect anything from the family members as they have left her alone. She tells son generally inherit the property so atleast son should take care of old parents. But she is happily staying with husband and hence she doesn’t prefer to go old age home. She doesn’t have knowledge regarding elderly support through Government schemes and NGOs.

5.2 Conclusion

The case studies undertaken in the study are relevant to understand the elderly psychology of the vulnerable situation that majority of elderly face with some exceptions to the fact. The cases taken here are from different background of elderly respondent living arrangement showing a distinct elderly issue all total. Hence, the respondent’s in-depth analysis shows that in the study both male and female are interviewed. Elderly male and female (4 and 5 respectively) depicts the fact that all are in a distressing situation. The case studies take account of both male and female respondents to give a gender perspective approach. The male age group ranges from 70 to 76 whereas; the female age ranges from 63 to 76. Among male 2 are widower, similarly in female all are widowed expect one. The case study does not neglect the schedule indigenous population were 2 schedule caste men and women are included, along with 2 backward caste men and women and also one forward caste women in the case study.
The gloomy condition of elderly undertaken in the case study mostly shows that
the elderly respondent whose spouse is did face abusive behaviour by daughter-in-law
which is common. It is because the younger children feel that the older parents now do
not possess life partner and depended on them for everything. In almost all the cases the
older men were depended financially on the family which makes them feel paralised
physically and financially where the result of their dependents is humiliation. Many
elderly share equal demands of increase in old age pension. Elderly female are found to
be in a more vulnerable situation compare to male counterparts for dependence on
finance in their family because they do not do job earlier resulting in no savings. Most of
the elderly are not happy in their current home as they are not respected in their familial
participation. In almost all the cases the daughter-in-law plays a sarcastic role of abuse,
the old isolated depended elderly where son is found to take the support of his wife.
Female are mostly of the opinion that they would prefer to get bad behaviour from their
married son but do not complain to anyone or move to old age homes as they are more
emotionally attached to their family. The overall opinion of the elderly is that they are
not satisfied in terms of support with regards to emotional, physical and financial from
their current family.
Table 5.1: Profile of Case Studies – Elderly Persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Educational Status</th>
<th>Living Arrangements</th>
<th>Person Support</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Financial</th>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Primary School</td>
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<td>Alone</td>
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<td>All the Children</td>
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<td>BC</td>
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<td>Son’s Family</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>Widower</td>
<td>SC</td>
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<td>Son’s Family</td>
<td>Grand Children</td>
<td>Alone</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>MBC</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Brother’s Son’s Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Unmarried Son’s Family</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Unmarried Son</td>
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<tr>
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<td>FC</td>
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<td>7.</td>
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Note: SC – Scheduled Caste, MBC = Most Backward Caste, BC = Backward Caste and FC = Forward Caste