

The Living Arrangements of Elderly People in Siliguri, West Bengal: An Empirical Investigation

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Abstract: In Gerontology, the dynamics of living arrangements of older adults have been explained with three theoretical perspectives, namely, modernization theory, power/bargaining model and mutual aid model. The modernization theory claims that as the societies become modernize, the intergenerational households gradually disappear from society. On the other hand, the power and bargaining model ascertains that the resourceful elderly extract more support from adult children including coresidence with children than resource less aged. Finally, mutual aid model predicts that the coresidence of older adults with adult children largely depends on the needs of the elderly people.

In the present study, it is found that older adults with higher age, widowed elderly, and elderly assess their health as 'unhealthy' have greater probability to live with children. Aged women and aged with higher level of education are less likely to live with children, and income has no effect on living arrangements. However, the ownership of house aged people is likely to increase the possibility of living with children. Thus, the findings of present investigation considerably back the mutual aid model, but, also partially support the modernization theory and power and bargaining model.

Keywords: Older Adults, Living Arrangements, Parental Needs, Multigenerational Coresidence, Modernization Theory

1. Introduction

The living arrangement of the elderly people is considered one of the vital issues in Gerontology. Because, the living arrangements of the older adults largely shape their level of access to informal care and support. In India, this issue becomes more important, since, majority of Indian population are not covered by any social security measures of the government. In old age, overwhelming majority of Indian population solely depends on family for care and support. Therefore, any alteration in living arrangements of the elderly people would have wider implications for their overall wellbeing.

The modernization theory claims that as the society moves from rural-agricultural to urban-industrial, the multigenerational coresidence declines in society for several reasons (Ruggles and Heggeness, 2008). The new employment opportunities created by industrial and business activities in a modernizing society provide the scope to adult children to free themselves from the dependency on family income and resources. The aged population also become less dependence on their children because of the expansion of social security measures of the government. People become more mobile for procuring education and employment. The value system in modern society also undermines the traditional familial obligations and promotes individualism. As a consequence the adult children start to live separately from their aging parents.

However, empirical studies conducted on the issue of impact of modernization process on the living arrangements of senior citizens in India and other developing countries indicate that the relationship between these two phenomena is much more complicated than it is assumed by the modernization theorists. Martin's (1989) study in four East Asian countries reveals that the incidence of coresidence of elderly people with children is more prevalent in urban areas than in rural areas. Apparently the finding contradicts modernization theory. By analyzing the census data of fifteen developing countries in Asia, Africa and South America, Ruggles and Heggeness (2008) reached to the conclusion that, contrary to the expectation of the modernization theory, in most of these countries the phenomenon of the intergenerational coresidence has increased over the years, and higher rate of GDP, higher life expectancy and urban livings are likelihood to increase the frequency of older-headed intergenerational coresidence. The authors indicate that the housing shortage, the 'keen keeping' role of older adults, uncertainty of

jobs of younger generations, expansion of social security measures for older adults might be the possible factors which have encouraged the younger generations to live with their aging parents despite of modernization of those societies. Cyrus-Chu et.al. (2011) in their comparative study of coresidence in with elderly parents in Taiwan and China found that traditional forms of coresidence is more prevalent in relatively economically developed Taiwan than China. However, their study also found partial support for the modernization theory at individual level i.e. the young couples with higher control over resources are less likely to live in traditional form of household. Sudha et.al. (2007) study in four Southern Indian states found very limited support for modernization hypothesis. Only in case of male respondents, rural residence is likelihood to increase the occurrence of live with children but other modernizing factors like higher education, 'modern' occupation of the parents do not likely to reduce the coresidence of the older adults with their children. Thus, the impact of modernization process on living arrangement of the elderly population remains indecisive.

Apart from modernization theory, the alternative theoretical perspectives like power/bargaining model and mutual aid model have also been developed to explain the determinants of living arrangements of the older adults (Sudha et al., 2007). The power and bargaining model predicts that resourceful elderly people will extract more support from adult children including living with them, than aged people without any control over resources. Contrary to power and bargaining model, the mutual aid model disseminates that the flow of support from adult children to their aging parents including coresidence are largely shaped by the requirements of the parents and capacity of the children to render such support.

Sudha et al. (2007) in their study in Southern Indian states observed that resourcefulness of older adults plays more vital role in determining coresidence of elderly parents with the children rather than parental needs. Muthukrishnaveni (2011) also found that aged with higher income in rural Tamil Nadu have a greater possibility to live with children than their counterpart. On the contrary, elderly with higher age are less likely to live with children than young-old. Thus, the findings endorse power/bargaining model rather than mutual aid model. Audinaryana et al. (1999) in their study among rural elderly women in Tamil Nadu found that women belong to relatively affluent family, lower castes and suffering from health ailments are more likely to live with children. On the other hand, self-supporting aged women and those who own house are less likely to coreside with children. Paul and Varma (2016) pointed out that economically independent elderly are more likely to live with spouse only, whereas, economically dependent aged people and elderly women are more likely to live with children. This study validates the mutual aid model. Similarly, Panigrahi's (2013) analysis of the 60th round NSSO data for the states of Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, reveal that economically dependent aged and elderly with higher age are more likely to live in family than economically independent aged and young-old. Studies of some other developing countries also suggest that coresidence of adult children with aging parents largely governed by the needs for support (widowhood, poor health) of the older adults (Yount, 2009; Cyrus-Chu et al., 2011). Thus, findings of the above studies are rather inconsistent with each other. This requires more study on this issue across the societies in order to reach any definite conclusion.

In this light, in the present investigation, a modest attempt has been made to explain the phenomenon of coresidence of older adults with their children with the help of above mentioned three theoretical perspectives, namely, modernization theory, power/bargaining model and mutual aid model.

Hypotheses

Based on the forgoing discussion, the following hypotheses have been formulated to examine the relative importance of different theoretical perspectives mentioned above in determining the coresidence of older adults with children:

- (i) Older adults with higher level of education and attach with non-caste based occupation are less likely to live with their children than their counterparts. (Modernization factor).
- (ii) Elderly who are widowed, assess them as unhealthy, higher in age, and with low income are more likely to live with their children than the older adults who are married, assess them as healthy, relatively younger in age, and with higher income (Mutual aid model).
- (iii) Aged with higher income and enjoy ownership of house are more likely to live with children than aged with low income or non-owner (Power and bargaining model).

2. Data and Method

The present study was conducted in four localities namely Vivekananda Pally, Sukanta Nagar, Deshabandhupara, and Palpara come under jurisdiction of Ward No. 30 and Ward No. 38 of Siliguri Municipal-Corporation. Siliguri is a sub-divisional headquarter of district of Darjeeling and it is situated in northern part of West Bengal. In terms

of population, it is the fourth largest city in West Bengal and largest in northern part of West Bengal. The city is famous for tea, tourism and timber industries, and is also known as gateway of North-East India.

In the study area total 858 older adults (60 years and above) were identified with the help of electoral roll, out of which, a sample of 165 aged male and 121 elderly female were selected for interview. But, in the present article, the data of 159 male and 115 female respondents, who had at least one surviving child, have been included for the purpose of analysis. Rest of respond have been dropped either because they were unmarried or because they were childless. A standard interview schedule was used to collect the information form the elderly people about their health, family life and psychological aspects, but, in the present article only the data of living arrangements of aged respondents, who had at least one surviving child, have been incorporated.

Initially the patterns of living arrangements of the older adults have been analyzed with the frequency distribution and percentage. In order to examine differential of pattern of living arrangement (i.e., living with children and living separately from children) according to the background characteristics of the respondent chi-square test has been conducted separately for elderly women and men. Finally, to explore the net effect of each of the independent variables on coresidence of older adults with children, binary logistic regression has been applied. The following variables are taken into consideration for logistic regression analysis:

Dependable Variable	
Living Arrangements of the Older Adults	(‘1’ if Live with Children and ‘0’ Live Separately from Children)
Explanatory Variables	
Gender of Older Adults	(‘1’ if Male and ‘0’ if Female)
Age of the Older Adults	(In Completed Years)
Marital Status of the Older Adults	(‘1’ if Married and ‘0’ if Widowed)
Educational Status of the Older Adults Occupational Status of the Older Adults	(In Completed Years of Education) (‘1’ if Respondent and/or Her/His Spouse Attached with Non-Caste Based Occupation in Working Age, and ‘0’ if Respondent and/or Her/His Spouse Attached with Caste Occupation)
Income Status of the Older Adults	(Actual Monthly Income of the Respondent and Her/His Spouse in Rupees)
Ownership of House	(‘1’ if Having Sole/Share in Ownership Either of the Respondent or Her/His Spouse or Both and ‘0’ if Not)
Heath Status of the Older Adults	(‘1’ if Fairly All Right and ‘0’ if Unhealthy)

3. Result and Discussion

1. Pattern of Living Arrangements of the Respondents: The living arrangements of the older adults reveal that majority of them live with children. The phenomena of living alone and living with married son are more prominent among female respondents than males. However, living with unmarried children and with spouse only are more common among men than women respondents. Living with married daughters is very uncommon which corresponds that traditional mindset is still playing vital role in formation of living arrangements of elderly population in India.

The reason for the gender differences of living arrangements can be attributed to the gender differential of age at marriage between husband and wife in Indian society, and consequently higher rate of widowhood among women than men. In India, most of the women usually marry a person with higher age. It is, therefore, quite obvious that husbands die before than wives in most of the cases. Those elderly women who live with spouse only, after the death of husband have a possibility to live alone, but such possibility in case of elderly men is relatively low because of the low rate of widowhood among them. This is one of the main reasons for higher incidence of living alone among elderly women, and ‘living with spouse only’ among elderly men.

Further, the vital events in life like marriage, birth of children or marriage of the children occur relatively in advanced age in case of men than women because of relatively higher age at marriage for men. Therefore, when men reach in the age of 60 years or above, some or all of their children may remain unmarried, but, such possibility in case of women is relatively remote because of early age of progeny. These differences can explain the phenomena of higher percentage of elderly men living with unmarried children and higher percentage elderly women living with married children. The living arrangements of elderly women and men have been portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Living Arrangements of the Respondents

Living Arrangements	Male		Female		Person	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Living Alone	0	0	9	7.8	9	3.2
Living with Spouse Only	33	20.8	14	12.2	47	17.2
Living With Unmarried Children	34	21.4	14	12.2	48	17.5
Living With Married Sons	75	47.2	71	61.7	146	53.3
Living With Married Daughters	4	2.5	3	2.6	7	2.6
Living With Souse, Children and Other Relatives	11	6.8	4	3.5	15	5.5
Living With Other Relatives Only	2	1.3	0	0	2	0.7
Total	159	100	115	100	274	100

Source: Field work

2. Living Arrangements of the Respondents by their Background Characteristics: The living arrangements of the elderly respondents according to their socio-economic and demographic background have been depicted in Table 2. The data reveal that the incidence of living of elderly respondents with children is more common among old-old (70 years or above) and among widowed elderly than young-old (60years-69 years) and married aged respondents, respectively. But it is statistically highly significant only for women respondents. Further, higher level of education and higher level of personal monthly income of the respondents reduce significantly the possibility of older adults to live with children. Surprisingly, elderly people or their spouses associated with non-caste based occupations are not less likely to live with their children than those aged who were associated with caste occupations in their working age. Finally, aged respondents who assessed them as unhealthy are more likely to live with their children than those older adults who assessed their health as ‘fairly all right’; and it is statistically significant for both male and female respondents.

Thus, the bivariate analysis shows that the elderly persons who are in relatively more disadvantage conditions, like higher in age, widowed, or assess themselves as unhealthy, have higher tendency to live with children than young-old, married elderly, and aged assess their health as fairly all right. The elderly with better education and income have lesser tendency to live with children. These findings clearly indicate that the needs of older adults, rather than their bargaining power, play more pivotal role in determining the coresidence of older adults with children. The findings also partially support the modernization hypothesis. The elderly with better educational level are more likely to live separately from children, but attachment of the aged respondents with caste occupation in their working age does not lead to higher incidence of coresidence with children.

Table 2: Living Arrangements of the Respondents according to Background Characteristics

Variables	Male			Female		
	Live with Children	Not Live with Children	Total	Live with Children	Not Live with Children	Total
1. Age Group						
60-69 Years	64 (73.6)	23 (26.4)	87 (100)	39 (66.1)	20 (33.9)	59 (100)
70 Years and Above	60 (83.3)	12 (16.7)	72 (100)	53 (94.6)	3 (5.4)	56 (100)
Chi-squire	2.1906			14.6273**		
2. Marital Status						
Married	106 (76.3)	33 (23.7)	139 (100)	31 (68.9)	14 (31.1)	45 (100)
Widowed	18 (90)	2 (10)	20 (100)	61 (87.1)	9 (12.9)	70 (100)
Chi-squire	1.923			5.7044*		
3. Educational Status						

Up to Primary Level	13 (87)	2 (13)	15 (100)	42 (86)	7 (14)	49 (100)
Up to Secondary Level	53 (90)	6 (10)	59 (100)	38 (84)	7 (16)	45 (100)
H.S. and Above	58 (68)	27 (32)	85 (100)	12 (57)	9 (43)	21 (100)
Chi-squire	10.1876**			8.4127*		
4. Occupation of the Respondents or Spouse						
Caste Occupations	15 (88)	2 (12)	17 (100)	9 (82)	2 (18)	11 (100)
Non Caste Based Occupations	109 (77)	33 (23)	142 (100)	83 (80)	21 (20)	104 (100)
Chi-squire	1.1645			.0251		
5. Monthly Income of the Respondents and/or Spouses						
Up to Rs. 10000/-	48 (96)	2 (4)	50 (100)	63 (88)	9 (12)	72 (100)
Rs. 10001/- to Rs. 20000/-	38 (76)	12 (24)	50 (100)	12 (63)	7 (37)	19 (100)
Above Rs. 20000/-	38 (64)	21 (36)	59 (100)	17 (71)	7 (29)	24 (100)
Chi-squire	15.9036**			7.1601*		
6. Ownership of House by the Respondents and/or Spouses						
Own House	115 (78)	32 (22)	147 (100)	65 (80)	16 (20)	81 (100)
Do Not Own	9 (75)	3 (25)	12 (100)	27 (79)	7 (21)	34 (100)
Chi-squire	0.0675			0.0104		
7. Self-Assessed Health Status						
Fairly All Right	83 (73)	30 (27)	113 (100)	59 (74)	21 (26)	80 (100)
Unhealthy	41 (89)	5 (11)	46 (100)	33 (94)	2 (6)	35 (100)
Chi-squire	4.6815*			6.4174*		

Source: Field Work

Notes: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

*Significant at 0.05 level,

**Significant at 0.01 level

3. Determinants of Living Arrangements

In this section, the relative contribution of different socio-economic variables in determining the coresidence of elderly people with their children has been analyzed. Since, all these variables operate simultaneously, it is necessary to control the effect of other variables in order to find out the net effect of each of the individual variables. Hence, a multivariate analysis is needed to assess the magnitude of effect of each of the variables. Meanwhile, in the present analysis the dependable variable is dichotomous in nature (Whether living with children '1' or otherwise '0'), therefore, binary logistic regression has been applied on the data. The results are presented in Table 3.

The results depict that with the augmentation of age, the likelihood of living of older adults with children increases for both sexes and it is statistically highly significant in case of elderly women. Similarly, the widowed elderly have a greater chance to live with children than married aged. Further, subjective health perception of the older adults is positively connected with living with children (i.e. elderly who perceived them as 'unhealthy' are more likely to live with children than those who perceive their health as 'fairly all right') but statistically turned out to be significant only for elderly women. In terms of gender, it is found that elderly women are less likely to live with children than elderly men.

Among the economic indicators, it is found that respondents' monthly income has no effect on their living arrangements but sole ownership or share in ownership of the houses by the respondents' or by their spouses' likelihood to increase the probability to live with children. Being engaged in non-caste occupations of the respondents or of their spouses in their working age reduces the probability to live with children only in case of

elderly men but not in case of aged women. On the other hand, the higher level of education of older adults reduces the possibility of living with children for both sexes.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Analysis of the Living Arrangements of Older Adults for Both Sexes

Explanatory Variables	Male		Female		Person	
	β	Odds Ratio Exp(β)	β	Odds Ratio Exp(β)	β	Odds Ratio Exp(β)
Gender(1)	-	-	-	-	-.436	.647
Age	.005	1.005	.217	1.243**	.067	1.069**
Marital Status(1)	.703	2.020	.362	1.437	.394	1.483
Education	-.044	.957	-.085	.919	-.117	.889*
Occupation(1)	.091	1.096	-1.283	.277	-.667	.513
Income	.000	1.000*	.000	1.000	.000	1.000*
Ownership/Share of House(1)	-.997	.369	-1.339	.262*	-1.038	.354*
Health Status(1)	.961	2.615	1.668	5.304*	1.087	2.965**
Constant	1.959	7.092	-12.360	.000	-1.843	.158
N =	159		115		274	
Log Likelihood=	173.335		94.315		284.283	
P =	.000		.000		.000	

Source: Calculated by the Author

Notes: *Significant at 0.05 level,

**Significant at 0.01 level

4. Conclusion

In the present article, an attempt has been made to explicate the relevance of three theoretical perspectives namely, modernization hypothesis, mutual aid model and power and bargaining model to understand the phenomenon of coresidence of older adults with children. The first hypothesis related to modernization factor gets partial support from the present study as the analysis reveals that coresidence of older adults with children considerably decline with the increase of educational status of the respondents. In respect of occupation, however, the multivariate analysis reveals that non-caste based occupation of the respondents or their spouses reduces the probability to live with children only in respect of elderly men, but, in case of elderly women, such probability increases.

The second hypothesis related to mutual aid model gets considerable support from the present study. Both bivariate and multivariate analysis illustrate that relatively vulnerable sections of the older adults, like widowed aged, elderly with higher age and poor health, are more likely to live with children than their counterparts. However, the finding related to gender contradicts this hypothesis. Elderly women are less likely to live with children than elderly men.

Finally, the third hypothesis related to power and bargaining model also gets limited support from the present study. Income of the respondents has no effect on the living arrangements of the elderly. Ownership of house or share in ownership of house, however, likelihood to increase the probability of the older adults to live with children.

What is the overall picture emerges from the present study is that the modernizing forces may reduce the probability of coresidence of older adults with children but, when the older adults remain in relatively problematic situation, children, in majority cases, do reside with them. However, these findings should be read with great caution. Because, the present study was conducted in urban area with relatively small sample size and majority of the respondents belong to middle class families. So the findings may not hold true in other social context. In order to get a larger picture of determinants of living arrangements of older adults in India, rural-urban comparison and class wise comparative studies should be the imperative in future.

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