

Health and Economic Conditions of Elderly in a Metropolis: Mumbai

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Abstract

Health of elderly depends upon their socio economic and living environment. Lack of financial support, poor family support, and family burden will deprive elderly person leading to depression and lonely ness.

Keeping the above concept an attempt made in this paper to discuss the health & economic conditions of elderly persons and their living style in the family an urban set up. The data used has been taken from a survey conducted by the authors in Greater Mumbai Agglomeration at household level during January to June 2005. A representative sample of 128 elderly heads of the households aged 60 and above has been studied and their opinion has been collected through a pre designed questionnaire. The paper comprises of three main sections, namely, a) background characteristics; b) economic characteristics; and c) health related characteristics of the elderly population. Results revealed that high percentage (82) of elderly persons married between the ages 25-29. The maximum percentage of male children who stayed with elderly was one son (54 percent). About 84 percent of the respondents had completed at least high school level education. About 51 percent of the elderly opined that their present financial position was good while about 44 percent felt that it was either 'not good' or 'poor' that required financial help. About 37 percent of the elderly felt that their earnings saved were just sufficient for their livelihood whereas about 13 percent of them felt that their savings are spent heavily on health. About 32 percent of elders reported minor health problems while six percent reported serious health problems. Majority of the elders (68 percent) reported that as they don't have money for treatment of their illness, they have to depend on home treatment.

Insufficiency of income was felt more by the lower cadre of employees who lost their employment before the age 60 years. Lower category of employees was more affected by the loss of jobs at an early age. Lack of financial and family support, majority of elders did not have money to get medical treatment. Further analysis reveals that health of elders mostly depends up on their financial condition and family support. On the basis of findings from this study, suggestions are incorporated to improve the economic and health conditions of elderly.

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