

## Determinants of Perceived Quality of Relationship in Families Where Parents and Married Children Co-reside

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**ABSTRACT** This paper explores the determinants of Quality of Relationship of the families where parents co-reside with their married sons and daughters-in-law. 480 subjects from 120 families, equally drawn from the families belonging to upper middle (60 families or 240 respondents) and lower middle (60 families or 240 respondents) socio-economic strata were interviewed for the purpose. Multiple regression analyses was used to identify the factors which contribute significantly to Quality of Relationship of the families from two socio-economic strata. Findings revealed that work status of daughter-in-law and socio-economic status of the family contribute positively to the Quality of Relationship perceived by the family members. Besides this, it revealed that other relationship dimensions, that is, solidarity, active-recreation orientation, acceptance and caring and emotional support given by parents to children also contribute positively. Conflict and instrumental support given by children to parents were found to contribute negatively to quality of relationship of the families.

### INTRODUCTION

Last century witnessed a shift in fertility and mortality trends and the emergence of population ageing worldwide. Earlier population ageing was considered as a problem of only developed countries, but the recent trend shows that it is an equally valid problem of developing countries as well as including India. By the year 2025, nearly 75 per cent and in 2050 around 85 percent of world's elderly population is likely to be found living in developing countries (United Nations 2002). Even though the proportion of India's elderly is small as compared with that of developed countries, still it is very large in terms of the absolute numbers. The Indian aged population is currently the second largest in the world, the first being China with 150 million. The 1901 census showed only 12 million people above the age of 60 years in India. By 1951 the population of aged increased to 20 million. In the subse-

quent period of fifty years, it increased almost three times and reached around 77 million in 2001. Due to increased longevity a majority of parents and their children will experience several decades of their lives together (Gierveld and Dykstra 2004). Because of a higher vulnerability of old people for chronic diseases, intergenerational relationships and care giving seem to become central developmental issues in old age (Bradley and Cafferty 2001).

These patterns mean that older adults will form long-term relationships with the rest of the family, as documented by Farkas and Hogan (1995) that with life expectancy now exceeding upto 75 years, parents and children may develop relationships that last over 50 years. These extended relationships significantly have an impact on family dynamics (Bengtson 1996); yet, very little is known about this increasingly common intergenerational relationship (Giarrusso et al. 2001). The family, in its diverse forms and structures, is a fundamental unit of society linking the generations, preparing its younger members for active and productive adulthood and providing support for its older members. In India family is the most important institution that has survived through the ages. Researchers contend that the joint family still exists in all parts of the country. Even the most modern and nuclear family in contemporary times has the deep-rooted jointness in various structural and

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functional aspects. The presumption that modernization has changed traditional support systems in a uniform manner would be highly misleading. In spite of the many changes and adaptations to a pseudo-western culture and a move toward the nuclear family among the middle and upper classes, the modified extended family is preferred and continues to prevail in modern India. The reason may be the interdependence of the generations on each other for fulfillment of a need or two.

One of the primary principles guiding inter-generational relations is that of reciprocity: those who can help those in need such as fathers supporting children and sons supporting their aged parents. The interdependence of generations approach recognises the importance of reciprocity among individuals and between generations. In familial relationships, reciprocity is of the utmost importance as family members expect a balance between what they put into the relationship and what they get out of it. When this expectation is not met, conflicts are bound to follow.

A lot of structural and functional changes are being observed in present times when daughters-in-law, who are supposed to be traditional care-giver in families, are taking up jobs especially in middle socio-economic strata. At such times, the elderly parents take up the role as caretakers of grand children when the son/daughter-in-law is away from the home. All these factors have contributed to changes in the structure and the functioning of the family system. The present study examines how Quality of Relationship varies in such inter-generational families where elderly parents, their adult married son and daughter-in-law co-reside, posing research question: Is there any identifiable pattern of relationship issues that contributes most to quality of relationship? With a view to examine how various relationship issues, socio-economic status and work status of daughter-in-law shapes the perceived quality of relationships within the generations and between the generations, as viewed from the perspective of each member of both the generations, that is, fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law constituting first generation and sons and daughters-in-law constituting second generation. Review of literature relevant to the present study indicated dearth of studies which have taken perspective of both the generations for examining inter-generation-

al differences in families. Moreover, a few studies have examined the relationships in the light of work status of women for investigating how relationship issues vary in these families where women experience work-spillover effects. This conceptual framework provides the backdrop upon which the present study of quality of relationship and various relationship issues in families with working and non-working women was set.

## METHODOLOGY

### The Sample

The sample for the study comprised of 480 subjects from 120 families (4 subjects from one family), equally drawn from the families belonging to upper middle (60 families or 240 respondents) and lower middle (60 families or 240 respondents) socio-economic strata. The study was conducted within municipal limits of Ludhiana in year 2011. The sample drawn from each socio economic status was further divided into families with working daughter-in-law (30 families or 120 respondents) and families with non-working daughter-in-law (30 families or 120 respondents). The target respondents in each selected family were members of first generation, that is, father-in-law and mother-in-law and the members of second generation, that is, adult son and daughter-in-law. Thus a total of 16 sub-groups each comprising of 30 persons were formed.

A purposive selection of the respondents was made through personal contacts, peers, friends and acquaintances as per requirement of the study. It provided a snowballing effect to the selection of respondents initially. From the list of the 350 families fulfilling the inclusion criteria decided for the study, 120 families were selected randomly and were assigned to each of sixteen subgroups comprising of 30 respondents in each category.

### Tools Used for Data Collection

The socio-economic status of the respondents was determined administering Socio Economic Status Scale by Bhardwaj (2001). The Family Environment Scale (1993) by Chadha and Bhatia, a standardized scale was modified and administered for assessing relationship issues

among the families. The relationship issues investigated were conflict, solidarity, active recreation orientation, control, acceptance and caring, independence and organization. Self-structured interview schedule was prepared and used to assess the intergenerational exchange and reciprocity between the members of both generations in terms of support given to the other generation and vice-versa. The exchange pattern among the generations was mainly assessed under three categories namely Instrumental, Emotional and Financial exchange. The reliability coefficient for the instrument found to be 0.84 by Chronbach alpha method which was high enough to accept the reliability of the schedule. Self-structured interview schedule to assess the quality of relationship was administered having reliability coefficient of 0.80.

### Collection of Data

The subjects were personally contacted, the purpose of the visit was explained and the requisite information as per the study proforma was gathered. Each respondent was assured that the information provided would be kept confidential. The data were analyzed statistically in line with the objectives of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section describes the contribution of the independent variables investigated in the present study to the Quality of Relationship perceived by the families of Lower-middle socio-economic status and Upper-middle socio-economic status with 'working' and 'non-working' daughter-in-law. Regression analysis was employed to examine which of the variables contribute significantly to Quality of Relationship of the members of families of Lower-middle socio-economic status with 'working' and 'non-working' daughter-in-law/irrespective of the 'working' status of daughter-in-law. For this purpose, work status of daughter-in-law has been taken as dummy variable, that is, working daughter-in-law=1 and non-working daughter-in-law=0. For fitting of multiple regression model for Quality of Relationship for the families as a whole, along with work status of daughter-in-law, socio-economic status was also taken as dummy variable (that is, Upper-middle socio-economic status =2 and Lower-middle socio-economic status =1). On the basis of estimates and

p-values derived from step-wise multiple regression analysis, various models for Quality of Relationship were given.

### Model of Quality of Relationship for Families from Lower-middle Socio-economic Status

Table 1 deciphers the probability value (p-value) and estimates for the factors contributing to Quality of Relationship of lower-middle socio-economic status families irrespective of working status of daughter-in-law. The table also presents the results of fitting a multiple linear regression model to describe the relationship of independent variables and the quality of relationship perceived by the lower-middle socio-economic status families with 'working' and 'non-working' daughter-in-law.

**Table1: Step-wise multiple regression analysis with independent variables and Quality of Relationship perceived by families of lower-middle socio-economic status**

<i>Families with 'working' and 'non-working' daughter-in law (N=60)</i>		
<i>p-values and estimates for variables contributing significantly* to Quality of Relationship</i>		
<i>Relationship Issues</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>p-Value</i>
Constant	83.56	0.1859
Solidarity	0.57	0.0045*
Acceptance and caring	1.17	0.0047*
Instrumental support (children to parents)	-13.28	0.0000*
Emotional support (parents to children)	1.96	0.0000*
Work status	12.64	0.0427*
R-square	53.31 percent	

\*statistical significance at 95 % confidence level

For simplifying the model, only those factors or independent variables which were statistically significant, that is, whose p-value is less than 0.05 were kept in the model. Thus the final simplified equation for the model of quality of relationship for the lower-middle socio-economic status families was finally regressed to:

Quality of Relationship = 83.56 + 0.57 Solidarity + 1.17 Acceptance and Caring - 13.28 Instrumental support (children to parents) + 1.96 Emotional support (parents to children) + 12.64 Work Status.

It could be inferred from the model that out of all the independent variables, solidari-

ty, acceptance and caring, instrumental support from children to parents, emotional support from parents to children and work status of daughter-in-law contributed significantly to the Quality of Relationship of the respondents at 95 per cent confidence level. The R square value of 53.31 per cent shows that the model given describes only 53.31 per cent of variability in Quality of Relationship. It means there are some other variables for variation in the extent of Quality of Relationship of lower-middle socio-economic status families.

The model suggests that with unit increase in solidarity, acceptance and caring, emotional support (parents to children), there will be increase in Quality of Relationship of the families from Lower-middle socio-economic status, while with increase in instrumental support (children to parents), the Quality of Relationship will decline. This means that if parents receive more support from their children than they provide, the Quality of Relationship will decline.

Along with this, the model also suggests that the Quality of Relationship increases when the daughters-in-law are working. Money is a big issue in lower-middle socio-economic strata families. Daughters-in-law, who are working, in spite of doing all the household works and their kin keeping roles, also add to the family income, and are thus valued more in the family in comparison to the daughters-in-law who are non-working. In lower-middle socio-economic status, daughters-in-law who are working and add to the income of the family by earning are more looked up with honour than those who do not do paid jobs. The daughter-in-law works and remains outside the home and thus gets less involved in interactions which reduce the chances of friction in the relationships in comparison to the non-working daughters-in-law who remain all time at home. Those who live at home are not much valued as they do not contribute financially to the family. Apart from this, as they remain at home full time, more expectations for managing home and more of care giving is expected from them. These over expectations strain the relationships and thus leading to poor Quality of Relationship.

#### **Model of Quality of Relationship for Upper-middle Socio-economic Status Families**

From the data presented in Table 2, an equation of a multiple linear regression model was

fitted to describe the contribution of the independent variables taken in the present study to Quality of Relationship of families of upper-middle socio-economic status.

**Table 2: Step-wise multiple regression analysis with independent variables and Quality of Relationship perceived by families of upper-middle socio-economic status**

<i>Families with 'working' and 'non-working' daughter-in law (N=60)</i>		
<i>p-values and estimates for variables contributing significantly* to Quality of Relationship</i>		
<i>Relationship Issues</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>p-Value</i>
Constant	101.82	0.0325
Conflict	-0.54	0.0003*
Solidarity	0.91	0.0000*
Active recreation orientation	0.66	0.0018*
Instrumental support (children to parents)	-8.79	0.0001*
Financial support (children to parents)	0.90	0.0289*
Emotional support (parents to children)	1.46	0.0004*
R-square	79.84 per cent	

\* Significant at 95% confidence level

The equation of the fitted model is given by:

Quality of Relationship = 101.82 - 0.54 Conflict + 0.91 Solidarity + 0.66 Active Recreation Orientation - 8.79 Instrumental (children to parents) + 0.90 Financial (children to parents) + 1.46 Emotional (parents to children)

The R-square statistic indicates that this model describes 79.84 per cent of variability in Quality of Relationship of upper-middle socio-economic status families.

It could be inferred from the model that among all the independent variables taken, conflict, solidarity, active recreation orientation, instrumental support (children to parents), financial support (children to parent) and emotional support (parent to children) contribute significantly to the Quality of Relationship of the members of families of upper-middle socio-economic status. The model indicates that except conflict and instrumental support (children to parents), with unit increase in other variables mentioned in the equation, there will be increase in the Quality of Relationship of families of upper-middle socio-economic status. Conflict and instrumen-

tal support (children to parents) were inversely related to Quality of Relationship, that is, with unit increase in conflict and instrumental support that children give to parents, the Quality of Relationship of the families decreases. Conflict would certainly diminish the Quality of Relationship because as much as disagreement and aggression is expressed openly in the family, more less the satisfaction one would derive from his/her daily interactions with the family members. Sometimes what appears on the surface to be a simple issue can reflect deeper relational struggles about power and intimacy (for example, disagreements about how much time to spend together versus with other people). Persistent conflict about relational issues has the greatest impact on relationship satisfaction (Kurdek 1994).

Solidarity is the degree of cohesion among the family members. Thus more will be the solidarity, better will be the Quality of Relationship. Active recreation was also found to be contributing significantly positively to Quality of Relationship. Every family desires to have a strong bond and cooperation among its members. These are achieved if within the family, every member has enough time to be with the rest of the family. Indeed, recreation activities generate interests of every person to be with the family. Instead of treating the family as regular and ordinary persons you meet as you wake up, eat, and a mere company in the house, they become your playmates and best friends whom you can share anything and whom you can work with on almost everything without any mental reservation or fear of rejection. In this way, the family really becomes an integral part and plays an active role in the development and nurturing of every family member. Findings from both studies demonstrate that structured outdoor family recreation programming has a strong positive relationship with family strength (Freeman and Zabriskie 2002). Previous leisure research strongly supports the hypothesis that leisure activity and group cohesiveness are related (Bossard and Boll 1963; Havighurst 1957).

In both the socio-economic strata, it was found from the model that instrumental support provided by children to their parents would diminish the Quality of Relationship of the families. This goes with our cultural model where parents are supposed to be providing more support to their children instead of receiving the same from their children. In families, when parents help their sons and daughters-in-law in prac-

tical household help, shopping, dropping and receiving children and in child rearing, the relationship quality is perceived as better by all the members of the families because parents feel contented that they are doing their obligations and children i.e. sons and daughters-in-law too feel less burdened. Some researchers also support that when parents perceive themselves as providers instead of receivers, they enjoy higher self esteem and find their relationships as more satisfying.

### Composite Model of Quality of Relationship for Families with Respect to Work Status and Socio-economic Status

This section presents the results of fitting a multiple linear regression model to describe the contribution of independent variables (relationship issues along with work status of daughter-in-law and socio-economic status) to Quality of Relationship of families (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Step-wise multiple regression analysis with independent variables and Quality of Relationship perceived by families**

<i>Families with 'working' and 'non-working' daughter-in-law from upper-middle and lower-middle socio-economic status (N=120)</i>		
<i>p-values and estimates for variables contributing significantly* to Quality of Relationship</i>		
<i>Relationship Issues</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>p-Value</i>
Constant	90.13	0.0362
Conflict	-0.30	0.0097*
Solidarity	0.74	0.0000*
Active recreation orientation	0.43	0.0271*
Acceptance and caring	0.55	0.0145*
Instrumental support (children to parents)	-8.70	0.0000*
Emotional support (parents to children)	1.39	0.0000*
Work status	9.84	0.0267*
Socio-economic status	11.32	0.0286*
R-square	69.48 per cent	

\* Significant at 95% confidence level

The equation of the fitted model for Quality of Relationship of the families is given as:

Quality of Relationship = 90.13 - 0.30 Conflict + 0.74 Solidarity + 0.43 Active Recreation Orientation + 0.55 Acceptance and Caring - 8.70 Instrumental support (children to parents) + 1.39



Emotional support (parents to children) + 9.84 Work Status + 11.32 Socio-economic status.

The R-Squared statistic indicates that the model as fitted explains 69.48 per cent of the variability in Quality of Relationship of the families irrespective of their socio-economic status.

Further, it is evident from the model that out of all the variables studied in the present study, conflict, solidarity, active-recreation orientation, acceptance and caring, instrumental support (children to parents), emotional support (parents to children), work status of daughter-in-law and socio-economic status contributed significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) to Quality of Relationship of families. With increase in solidarity, active-recreation orientation, acceptance and caring, emotional support (parents to children) there will be increase in the Quality of Relationship while with increase in conflict and instrumental support (children to parents), the Quality of Relationship of families will decline. Moreover, it is noteworthy here that the model suggests that quality of relationship is perceived as better by families with 'working' daughter-in-law of upper-middle socio-economic status, that is, the families where daughters-in-law are working and the socio-economic status is higher, the quality of relationship would be better. It could be true because with increase in socio-economic status, the daughter-in-law could afford paid help at home for household chores and thus she could give more time to her family and better take care of her elderly parents-in-law. Moreover, the issues of conflict are supposed to be less in the homes where socio-economic status is higher as there are more resources and the nagging over money matters happens less. Limited resources available to poorer and less educated families and sometimes unequal distribution of these resources might result in higher conflict. Quality of Relationship would be better when parents provide more emotional support to their children than receiving. It is true because aged parents are always welcome when by virtue of their experiences and wisdom, they advise children, listen to their problems and share family news with them. This is satisfying in the part of parents also because they perceive that they are playing very well their ascribed role of guiding the children and if asked for such help by children they feel themselves as worthy.

### CONCLUSION

The study shows that work status of daughter-in-law and socio-economic status of the fam-

ily contribute positively to the Quality of Relationship perceived by the family members. Besides this, it revealed that other relationship dimensions, that is, solidarity, active-recreation orientation, acceptance and caring and emotional support given by parents to children also contribute positively. Conflict and instrumental support given by children to parents were found to contribute negatively to Quality of relationship of the families.

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