

**Demographic Transition in Kerala: A Perceptual Analysis Among the Aged**

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Abstract - In the Global scenario, the developed countries witnessed a positive demographic change of low birth and death rates due to the growth of national income, per capita income and the overall development process. Kerala can be projected as a striking example for its quick demographic transition without adequate economic backing and has entered the third stage of demographic transition with low birth rates, death rates and infant mortality rates. The development experience witnessed by Kerala for the last few decades is referred as the 'Kerala model of Development'. One of the important consequences of the demographic transition is population aging. In this context a study was conducted in Kottayam district among 125 families of age limits above 55 years who had retired from Government service, to analyse their perceptions regarding the most vibrant issues of today like retirement age, voluntary retirement scheme and desire to work after retirement. From the study, it can be concluded that there are different remarks regarding these issues. Even then, the majority of the respondents wanted to create more employment opportunities for the younger generation in order to see the prosperity of their offspring and to continue their lineage. The aged population is more aware of the benefits of pensionable job and the financial security they are enjoying; they want their offspring also to enjoy the same.

Keywords- Demographic transition, Kerala model of development, Voluntary Retirement Scheme

I. INTRODUCTION

Demographic transition means the change of a population from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates. Birth, death and infant mortality rates are the key parameters which determine the demographic profile of a country. Generally, the theory of demographic transition explains three stages. The first stage is with high birth rate and high death rate. The second stage is with high birth rate and low death rate. This is the stage of 'population explosion'. And the third stage is with low birth rate and low death rate.

In the global scenario, the developed countries witnessed a positive demographic change of low birth, and death rates due to the growth of national income, per capita income and the overall development process. This strong economic background supported these countries, to attain social development. India as a developing country still remains in the second stage of demographic transition and consequently faces population explosion.

Kerala can be projected as a striking example for its quick demographic transition without adequate economic backing and has entered the third stage of demographic transition with low birth rates, death rates and infant mortality rates. The impressive performance of Kerala state in the demographic front has received worldwide attention and admiration. The fact that in Kerala, social development preceded economic development has been highlighted in several studies and has been often described as the 'Kerala Model of Development'. The development experience witnessed by Kerala for the last few decades is referred as the 'Kerala model of development' [1]. The major social changes that took place during the period were the breakup of the Hindu joint families, the spread of basic literacy particularly female literacy, improvement in the basic health facilities and a large scale migration of men mainly to the Gulf countries [2].

Kerala occupies 1.3 percent of the total land area of the country and supports 3.1 percent of its population. The population of Kerala was enumerated as 33.3 million in 2011 and they lived in around 7 million households. The state has the highest density of population in India with 860 persons per sq.km. compared to the all India average of 368 [3]. The state is also unique for its favorable female to male ratio. Kerala has experienced the sharpest fertility decline in India, with levels of income and nutrition among the lowest, this state has achieved results in controlling population growth comparable to those in the most successful middle-income countries. The Human Development Index of Kerala is also the highest in the country. Kerala can now claim to have reached the third stage in demographic transition as revealed by a low birth rate, death rate and infant mortality rate. Birth rate in Kerala stands very low when compared to that of developed nations.

The economy of the state is highly dependent on agriculture. Nearly half the labour force is engaged in agriculture. This has provided a low per capita income which is below the national average. Hence, with respect to some of the demographic characteristics of its population, Kerala appears to be more akin to the developed nations of the West, whereas its economy resembles that of the developed nations of the East [4].

The demographic transition in Kerala has brought about higher level of social development in the state. The miracle of Kerala model of development is that development has occurred even before the growth in productive sectors and domestic incomes. A number of factors and policies have contributed to these remarkable achievements in Kerala's demographic transition. The success was mainly due to more efficient delivery of services and a higher spin-off effect. One lesson from the Kerala experience is that the sequence in which policies affecting the determinants of fertility are implemented is as important as the policies themselves. In Kerala, the steps came in the right order- a reduction in infant mortality and child mortality accompanied by an increase in female education; followed by re-distribution policies and finally family planning programme [5].

One of the important consequences of the demographic transition is population aging. The term 'aging of a population' refers to a relative increase in the number of aged persons and a relative increase in the number of young persons [6]. An elderly person is one who is of age 65 years or above. The aged population is divided in to two categories(a) the ' young aged' which includes the age group, 60-74 and (b) the 'old aged' which includes the age group, 75 years and above. The number of elderly in Kerala is estimated to be about 4.6 million in 2011 [3]. In the present context, a study was carried out among the aged population to analyse their perceptions regarding the most vibrant issues of today like retirement age, voluntary retirement scheme and desire to work after retirement.

II. OBJECTIVE

The major objective of the study is to make an overview of the demographic transition in Kerala in relation to 'aging'.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was based on both primary and secondary data. For primary data collection, Kottayam district was selected for the study since it was announced as the first fully literate municipal town of India and it played an admirable role to make Kerala, the country's only state to acquire 100 percent literacy.

Survey was conducted in five taluks of Kottayam district. A judgement sample of 125 families of age limits above 55 years who had retired from Government service were selected for the study. The reasons for selecting retired persons as samples, since now Kerala's population contains a good proportion of aged persons and also about 32 percent of our budget provisions are being spent on salaries and pensions. The views of the respondents were elucidated through a questionnaire by personal interviews.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Among 125 families surveyed, 84 persons (67.2 percent) were males and 41 persons (32.8 percent) were females. 34.4 percent (43 persons) of the respondents were in the age group 56-59 while 52.0 percent (65 persons) were in the age group 60-74, ie in the young aged category and 13.6 percent (17 persons) were in the age group above 75 years, ie in the old aged category.

The retirement age for the state Government service is 55 years and this is mandatory. A question regarding the retirement age, ie, whether the age '55' can be considered as a retirement age and whether it should be raised was asked among the respondents. There are different remarks regarding retirement age among the respondents.

Table1: Remarks Regarding Retirement Age

Remarks	Number	Percentage
Don't extend due to unemployment problem	61	48.8
Extend upto 60, due to high improvement in social factors	59	47.2
Fix the retirement age to get 30 years service	5	4.0
Total	125	100.0

It can be seen from the table that 48.8 percent of the respondents did not like to extend the retirement age due to the huge unemployment problem prevailing in the state and the necessity to provide employment opportunities to the younger generation. 47.2 percent wanted an extension of the retirement age upto 60. According to them, retirement age has now been fixed in the healthy stage. Social factors like life expectancy, standard of living, improvement in health etc. have not been considered at all. By the age of 55, one is free from family duties and can serve better than before. The

other reason is people are now retiring at the age when they are most efficient and experienced. 4.0 percent are of the opinion that retirement age should be fixed as the employers get 30 years service.

V. VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT SCHEME

Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) is a scheme introduced by the Government in certain sectors, which enables the employees to retire from the service without any compulsion before their retirement age. The table below shows the opinion of voluntary retirement scheme.

Table2: Voluntary Retirement Scheme

Opinion	Number	Percentage
Agree	85	68.0
Disagree	30	24.0
Not thought	10	8.0
Total	125	100.0

It is seen from the table that 68.0 percent of the respondents agree with this scheme and have the opinion that it is a good scheme and it depends upon each one's desire. Those who want alone need take, since there is no compulsion. They also pointed out the reason of taking VRS as, due to the changing scenario it seems to be very difficult to cope with the modern technology and also feel difficult to ask doubts to the younger generation. Pressure of work, ill health, mental tensions etc. are other reasons for taking VRS. 24.0 percent of the respondents disagree with this scheme and pointed out that it did not give any employment opportunities to others. It is our responsibility to do the duty eventhough there is hardships. After taking VRS, life becomes boring and also did not get any respect from others. It is surprising to note that 8.0 percent have not yet thought about VRS. This is due to the reason that this scheme would not affect them in anyway in their life, since at that time, there was not a scheme like this and they have to work until they retire or otherwise they have to resign from the job without any benefits. So they didn't bother about it.

VI. DESIRE TO WORK AFTER RETIREMENT

After retirement some persons prefer to work in order to earn some money or to be engaged. The table below shows the desire to work among elderly after retirement.

Table3 : Desire to work after Retirement

Desire to work after retirement	Number	Percentage	Number of females	Percentage
Yes	46	36.8	12	29.3
No	79	63.2	29	70.7
Total	125	100.0	41	100.0

It can be seen from the table that 36.8 percent of the respondents have the desire to work after retirement. Among the females, 29.3 percent have the desire to work retirement, but 70.7 percent of them did not have any desire to work after their retirement. Majority of the respondents (ie. 79 out of 125) did not have any desire to work after their retirement. This is due to the reason that in the past, one gets employment at an early age and so they get a long period in service. So after retirement, they prefer to take rest or to do the household duties. Those who liked to work after retirement belongs to the age group below 65. The survey reveals that nobody in the age group above 65 years expressed their willingness to work after retirement.

VII. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the aged population of Kottayam district furnishes several valuable information regarding the impact of demographic transition. The factors that worked behind this transition made commendable progress in the society, in the attitude and in the life of the people of Kerala. Education and literacy levels are key indicators of individual resources for employment and economic achievement in adulthood which help them in determining the quality of life in old age much higher than the jobless. The aged population wants to create more employment opportunities for the younger generation with a sense of satisfaction to see the prosperity of their offspring and to continue their lineage. All the respondents of the aged population are pension earners and it supports them to lead a better life without depending on others. The aged population is more aware of the benefits of pensionable job and the financial security they are enjoying, which boost them in keeping a positive attitude to younger generation. In Kerala, the retired Government servants get pension which help them to lead a prosperous life. But for those people who have no job, there is no pension. Some category of the people get only a nominal amount as pension and it will not help even to cover their medical requirements. In developed countries, the social security system is very strong and therefore nothing to worry for them in the old age. So social security system should also be introduced as a human right privilege atleast to cover the medical facilities and it will really be a blessing for the aged population.

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