

Support Systems in Old Age: Its Nature and Extent in Rural Bangladesh

Kaniz Quamrun Nahar Chhabi (Interdisciplinary Graduate School of
Science and Technology, Shinshu University)
Sasaki Takashi (Shinshu University)
Kazi Shek Farid (Bangladesh Agricultural University)

Socio-economic and demographic transitions in a country pose a threat to the provision of supports to the older people. Traditionally support in old age in Bangladesh primarily comes from the family. There are numerous indications of the socio-demographic changes that may affect inter-personal support in old age in Bangladesh. Increases in life expectancy at birth lead to increased number of older population and declines in fertility lead to decreased family size, which may have repercussions for support in old age in Bangladesh where the support of older people has traditionally been the responsibility of the children. Increased involvement of women in economic activities and physical separation of children associated with urbanization and rural-urban and international migration also changes the support system for elderly in the family in rural Bangladesh.

Despite its importance, systematic research on the elderly and their support systems in Bangladesh has not yet been started widely. However, a few studies have been conducted in this regard. These studies showed that the propensity to receive support is, however, greater for men than women and men are mainly providers of material support and women of practical and emotional support. Living arrangements also influences the extent of receiving support in that co-residence substantially strengthens intergenerational ties related to financial support, physical support or daily care, and emotional support or communication. Again, sons are considerably more likely than daughters to provide economic aid to parents. Keeping the above views in mind the present study aims to explore the nature and extent of various forms of supports for older people and the sources of such supports in the changing environments of rural Bangladesh.

Three villages of different three upazilla (smaller unit of district) under the district of *Gaibandha* were selected to achieve the objective of the study. The survey was undertaken during the months of June and July in 2008. The persons who were aged 60 and above in that area and were accessible within the above mentioned period, were considered as respondents. The total numbers of the respondents were 196, among which 91 were male and 105 were female. Necessary data were collected from the respondents through direct interview survey by using structured and pre-tested interview schedule.

In view of the above circumstances, the following findings of the present study will be addressed-

1. Identification of personal characteristics of the elderly
2. Assessment of the nature of support
3. Assessment of the extent of receiving support
4. Identification of providers of support
5. Assessment of the satisfaction level of elderly with the support they receive
6. Identification of factors responsible for receiving support. The factors may be age, sex, level of education and income, marital status, self-evaluation of health condition, living arrangement, and relationship and status of conflict with family members.
7. Identification of problems in receiving support