

CHAPTER: 2

GENERAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

An attempt has been made in this chapter to highlight the general profile of the respondents of the study. These include their Age structure, Marital status, Caste background, Educational qualification, their Living arrangements, Family income, Family professions and the number of children of the respondents.

Background and demographic aspects of the studied area:

In this regard it is worth mentioning that the study has been conducted in the Municipal area of Siliguri subdivision of the Darjeeling district, West Bengal. The city of Siliguri lies across the Darjeeling district and some parts of it falls in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal as well. 14 out of 47 wards of Siliguri Municipal Cooperation fall in the Jalpaiguri district. In the year 1994 the city attained the status of Corporation. The city has a population of 513264 (Population Census 2011, n.d.). In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, samples from two different types of social classes are drawn i.e. Middle class and Poor families and for this purpose, some areas are purposely selected from where samples of both the classes are available in sufficient number.

Representatives of the middle class are drawn from Ward number 16 and Ward number 15 of Siliguri Municipal Corporation area. Both the areas fall in the Darjeeling District and have sufficient number of representatives of the Middle class. The populations of these wards are 8,002 and 4,922 (for ward number 15 and 16 respectively) with a total number of 3,358 households (2,071 and 1,287 households in ward number 15 and 16 respectively) (IndiKosh- All about India, n.d.). The total populations of elderly women in these wards are 229 (according to the voter's list updated recently before the conduction of the study). The people residing in these areas are mainly service holders including both Govt. and private services and a large number of

them are also engaged into business. Besides these, a considerable portion of these people are self-employed like Doctors, Lawyers, and Professors/Teachers or are engaged independently in other skilled jobs. The people residing in these areas are mostly the owners of the plot of land that they reside on. Many of these people are residing here as long as 40-50 years. However due to the emergence of many new apartments and housing complexes in these areas, in the recent years many new comers are also found, who are residing here from 5- 10 years. Besides this a number of families also stay in rent.

In a similar way, representatives of poor families are drawn from some colonies which fall under Ward number 20 of Siliguri Municipal Corporation area. Ward number 20, lie in and around the railway track that passes across the city. The nearest railway station is Siliguri Town Station. This ward mainly comprises of slums and squatted settlements. There are altogether six slums under this ward, these are Durgadas colony, Jyotinagar colony, Chittaranjan Colony, Rammohan colony, Sraban Nagar colony and Fuleshwari Unnyan colony. The areas chosen for the study are Chittaranjan Colony and Durgadas Colony. The total population of Ward number 20 is 9009 with approximately 2181 households. There are approximately 334 and 364 households in Chittaranjan and Durgadas colony respectively (IndiKosh - All about India, n.d.). The total population of elderly women in these colonies is approximately 137 (according to the voter's list updated recently before the conduction of the study). In this context it is to be noted that the number of elderly women who were actually available in the area during the study, are much less in number as many of them could not be found or contacted due to death, migration or visit to some other place at the time when the study was conducted. This is however true for both the classes. The residents of these colonies are mostly Hindu and are mostly Bengali speaking. Majority of them are engaged in manual work, semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. They are mostly labourers, house maids, helpers, van pullers, rickshaw pullers, auto drivers, venders, carpenters, mechanics, factory workers etc. while a few of them are also self-employed who runs small business or are petty shopkeepers. Majority of the people of these areas are migrants. Both interstate and international migrations are found here, as a large number of them have migrated from Bangladesh followed by Bihar, Assam and even Orissa in few cases. The period of their stay in these colonies is as long as 30 years and even more in few cases.

Demographic profile and Socio-economic background of the respondents:

Age Structure:

Age is an important indicator that reflects the degree of autonomy and resources enjoyed by a person. It is a significant indicator of the status and authority enjoyed by a person both in the family and society. It is also significant in reflecting the health and physical status of an individual. Many studies conducted on elderly persons reflect the close association of chronological age with the level of functioning of individual in different social roles, their level of adjustment and their social and psychological wellbeing. Nasreen (2009) observes that chronological age not only influences the status and position of an individual in his family and society but also reflects the health condition and efficiency of an individual. Mishra (1987) on the other hand is of the view that it is important in determining their living arrangements.

In this study, the elderly women belonging to the two social classes are further classified into various subgroups, depending on their age. The three sub-groups used here for classification are 60-69 years, which represents the category of women belonging to '*young old*' group, secondly the age group of 70-80 years, which represents women belonging to the '*middle aged old*' group and lastly 80 years and above representing women of the '*oldest old*' group. Table 2.1 represents the age structure of the elderly women of both the classes. It reflects that in case of both the classes a large majority of the respondents falls in the category of young old, i.e. in the age group of 60-69 years, followed by a smaller number belonging to the category of middle aged old, while a much smaller number of elderly women i.e. 12% belongs to the category of oldest old.

Age group	Middle class	Poor families	Total %
60-69 years	58	64	61
70-79 years	30	24	27
80 years and above	12	12	12

<i>Total</i>	50	50	100
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Marital status:

Marital status is also an important factor in determining the status of an elderly person, especially in case of women. India, being a patriarchal society, values women in relation to their marital status. Here a woman’s status and position is determined by her husband’s position in the society. Many scholars while conducting studies on widowhood has rightly points out that, ‘widowhood is the social death of a woman’. Marital status influences not only elderly women’s position in the family and society but also their economic, health and psychological status, their level of social adjustment and the level of their social participation. Bhadra (2011) points out that widowhood hampers the economic status of an elderly woman and sometimes even drags her into poverty. It lowers their status and results in their marginalisation both within the society and family, leading to their loss of decision making authority and increase in their level of dependency.

In the presents study, the marital status of the respondents is presented in Table: 2.2, which reflects that the number of widows is relatively higher than those belonging to the other categories. This is true for the respondents belonging to both the classes. Their total number is 57%, with 52% and 62% for middle class and poor families respectively. In this context it is to be mentioned that irrespective of class, a higher number of widows are found in the age-group of 70-79 (middle aged old) and 80+ (oldest old). This category is followed by a number of women who are presently married (40%). However as compared to the middle class, the number of widows is more among the poor families. On the other hand as compared to none of the poor elderly women, only 2% of the middle class respondents are found to be unmarried. Even the number of separated and divorced women is also found to be much less i.e. (2%) and this is found true for both the categories. Such a pattern, which shows greater number of widows among the elderly women, indicates greater life expectancy of the females which naturally leads to feminisation of ageing.

Table 2.2: Marital Status of the respondents (in percentage).

<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Presently married	44	36	40
Widow	52	62	57
Unmarried	2	0	1
Divorced/ Separated	2	2	2
Total	50	50	100

Caste group:

The caste group of the respondents is represented in Table 2.3 which reflects that comparatively higher number of respondents of the middle class family belongs to General caste, i.e. 92%, while this percentage is only 28% in case of poor families. On the other hand the number of respondents belonging to Scheduled caste is comparatively higher in case of poor families than middle class families, which shows 70% and 8% respectively. None of the respondents of the middle class families belongs to the category of Other Backward Class, while in case of poor families the number of members belonging to this category is 2%.

Table 2.3: Caste group of the respondents (in percentage).

<i>Caste group</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total %</i>
General	92	28	66
Scheduled Caste	8	70	43
Other Backward Class	0	2	1
Total	50	50	100

Educational Status:

Education is a tool to achieve greater success and satisfaction in life which in turn ensures well-being of an individual. Education not only determines economic security and prosperity, but also goes a long way in determining the level of adjustment in an individual, especially during her/his

old age (Mishra, 1987). It helps an individual to adjust himself during the phase of transition into old age.

The Educational Status of the respondents presented in Table 2.4 reflects that their educational status is quite poor. A considerable number of the elderly women i.e. 38% are Illiterate and 16 % of them are just literate or have received some Non-formal education. While looking at the class differences it is observed that the number of Illiterates in the poor families is much higher when compared to the number of Illiterates in the middle class families representing 60% and 16% respectively. Simultaneously, Non-formal education has been received by 26% of the respondents of the poor families, whereas in case of middle class families the percentage is 6%. Contrastingly, formal education below std. X has been received by 27% of the elderly women, out of which the percentage is 42% in case of middle class and only 12 % in case of elderly women belonging to poor families. Similarly, education till Secondary to High School level has been received by a very small number of respondents belonging to the middle class whereas in case of the poor families this number is more insignificant. On the whole the total number of elderly women who has received education till Secondary to High school level is only 9%. On the other hand a very small proportion of the elderly women are found to have completed their Graduation or pursued education till Master's Degree or above, showing only 6 % and 4% respectively. However, in case of Graduation and Master Degree, the number is only 12% and 8% in case of middle class whereas none of the respondents, belonging to the poor families have pursued education till Graduation or Master's degree and above. Thus, it can be analysed from the table that the educational status of the respondents in general is quite poor, as majority of them are illiterate. Even while comparatively analysing the situation it can be seen that, the educational status of the elderly women belonging to the middle class families are quite poor, where average number of elderly women studied below X std. The situation is even worst in case of respondents belonging to the poor families.

<i>Educational status</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Illiterate	16	60	38
Literate/ non-formal education	6	26	16
Below Std. X	42	12	27
Std. X to H.S/ High School	16	2	9
Graduation	12	0	6
Masters or above	8	0	4
<i>Total</i>	50	50	100

Family Income:

Income status of the family, where the elderly person resides in, is quite significant in determining the care and support being extended to them by her family members, especially in case where they are dependent. Moreover, when it comes to their medical and health care needs, the financial position of the family that they resides in goes a long way in determining the extent and kind of medical and health care being extended to them (Harris, 1983) and (Kaulagekar, 2007). In the study conducted by Subalekshmi (2014) it is pointed out that social class play an important role in the provision of care and support to the elderly person, for example, provision of financial assistance is found to be higher among the higher and middle income groups. The study reflects that care giving is a serious problem for the care givers in most cases, especially where the families belong to lower and middle income group. Moreover, in some cases the family income also determines an elderly person's living condition and the diet being provided to them in the family. In the present study the income structure of the families, chosen for the purpose of the study reflects the difference in the income status of the families of both the classes. Table 2.5 reflects that while the monthly income of the majority of the families belonging to the middle class falls in the range of 55000 and above, in case of poor families it lies in the range of 5001 – 15000. Moreover, the highest income group to which the poor families falls in, is the range of 15001- 25000, while in case of middle class families it ranges from 55000 and above. Moreover, the percentage of the poor families falling in the range of

15001-25000 is only 18% whereas in case of middle class families the number of families falling in the range of 55000 and above is 38%. This pattern reflects the difference in the financial status and the material benefits enjoyed by the members of the families belonging to both the classes.

Monthly Income range	Middle class	Poor families	Total %
up to 5000	0	18	9
5001- 15000	6	64	35
15001- 25000	16	18	17
25001-35000	16	0	8
35001-45000	14	0	7
45001-55000	10	0	5
Above 55000	38	0	19
Total	50	50	100

Main profession of the family of the respondents:

Table 2.6 reflects that the main profession of the families which the respondents belongs to. For the purpose of analysing, the professions are categorised into several categories. It is however seen that the members of the majority of the families studied are engaged into self-employment. However, the proportion is 46% in case of middle class families and comparatively much lesser i.e. 26% in case of poor families. Moreover, kind of self-employment which the members of the middle class families are mainly engaged into are Business, followed by medical and legal professionals like Doctors, Lawyers etc. whereas in case of poor families the members falling in self-employed category are mainly very small and petty business men, petty shopkeepers i.e. person running a small canteen, a road side tea shop, a small road side dhaba, pan shop, petty grocery shop in the community or other petty business. In 22% case the members of the middle class families are found to be engaged in Government jobs. The position held by the members of middle class who are government service holders are mainly Government School / College teachers, officers, clerks or engaged in other white collar jobs. Variations are also seen with regard to families whose primary income comes from Private jobs. In case of poor families private jobs include working in other's shop, working as drivers, caretakers, security guards,

working in garage etc. while for middle class this include working in Private schools / colleges/private banks/ Private companies/Big Stores/Corporate houses as officers, clerks, salesman, accountants, managers etc. A considerable large number of members i.e. 38% belonging to the poor families as compared to none belonging to the middle class families are found to be engaged in Manual/ Casual jobs which include working as rickshaw pullers, van pullers, toto/ auto drivers, contractual labourers, fruit/vegetable or other vendors, house maids etc. This is again followed by 22% of the poor families whose basis source of income comes from semi-skilled or non-skilled jobs. These mainly include families whose members work as carpenters, painters, plumbers, electricians, tailors, mechanics etc. Besides this only 6% of the families belonging to the middle class are found to be engaged in contractual jobs. These include contractual jobs in different government offices, projects, schools etc. Moreover, 12% of the families belonging to the middle class and 4% families belonging to the poor category are found to run their family with income through some other sources. In case of poor families, the elderly women falling in such category are either found to live alone or with their spouse (if married), where both the respondents and her spouse are non-working at present. They are either found to depend on beggary or depend on the mercy of their children for economic support. Whereas in case of middle class families, falling in such category, the elderly women either resides with their spouse alone (if married) and are found to run their daily living with the pension of their husband. However in one case, the widowed elderly belonging to the middle class family is found to live with her unemployed son who runs her family with the pension of her deceased husband.

Table 2.6: Main profession of the family of the respondents (in percentage)

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Self employed	46	26	36
Government job	22	0	11
Private job	14	10	12
Manual / casual job	0	38	19
Semi-skilled and non-skilled jobs	0	22	11
Contractual jobs	6	0	3
Other sources of Income	12	4	8
Total	50	50	100

Number of Children of the respondents:

Children are considered to be a greater source of support at old age. Thus the number of children is likely to determine the amount of support and care that an elderly person is likely to receive at his/her old age. When it comes to children and support at old age, it is always the sons who are considered to be primarily responsible for it. In Indian society, it's quite common to consider a male child/ sons as a support of their parents when they grow old. Keeping this factor in mind table number 2.7 (i) and 2.7 (ii) takes a look at the number of children of the elderly women and also the number of their sons and daughters.

Table 2.7 (i) shows that 4% of the elderly women in the middle class families have number children. This is mainly found in case of the elderly women who are either unmarried or are divorced, without any children. Majority of the respondents of the middle class families i.e. 48% are having 1-2 children, followed by 3-4 children i.e. 36%, in comparison to 40% and 40% respectively in cases of the elderly women belonging to the poor families. However only 8% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class families are having 5-6 children and 4% have children up to 9-10 in number in comparison to 20% and 0 % of the respondents belonging to the poor families respectively. The above trend is however an indication of the acceptance of the small family norm more among the elderly women belonging to the middle class families than those belonging to the poor families. However, 4% of the middle class respondents having 9-10 children in comparison to none belonging to the poor families are an indication of higher rate of survival of children in middle class families, which again points out to the differences in their financial background that often permit better treatment facilities and better nutrition to its members.

Table 2.7 (ii) shows that 64% of the respondents belonging to each category have 1-2 sons and 58% belonging to middle and 66% belonging to poor families are having 1-2 daughters. This is followed by 16% and 12% respondents belonging to middle and 22% and 12% belonging to the poor category, who are having 3-4 sons and daughters respectively. Whereas only a small number of respondents i.e. 2% and 4%, belonging to middle and 0% and 2%, belonging to poor families are having 5-6 sons and daughters respectively.

<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total %</i>
None	4	0	2
1-2	48	40	44
3-4	36	40	38
5-6	8	20	14
7-8	0	0	0
9-10	4	0	2
Above 10	0	0	0
Total	50	50	100

<i>Number of sons and daughters</i>	<i>Middle class</i>		<i>Poor families</i>	
	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters
None	18	26	14	20
1-2	64	58	64	66
3-4	16	12	22	12
5-6	2	4	0	2
Total	50		50	

Living Arrangements of the respondents:

Living arrangements generally determines the care and support that an elderly person receives from her family members. Table 2.8 shows that majority of the elderly women of the studied area, irrespective of their class, resides with their children and spouses (if are presently married). Moreover, the number residing with their married children (with or without spouse) both in the middle class and poor families is much more as compared to the number of elderly women residing with their unmarried/separated/divorced children (with or without spouse). This trend points out to the fact that many elderly person still today inspite of the breakdown of the joint families, co-resides with their married children, which is found to be a major source of care and their needed physical, emotional and psychological support at old age. On the other hand it also

points out to the existing family ties of Indian society which still remains untouched by the forces of modernisation. On the other hand, a very small section of elderly women are found to be residing with their married daughters, which is only 4% in case of middle class and 2% in case of poor families. It is significant to note that co-residence with married daughters are found mostly among the elderly women who are widows and who either have no son or whose son doesn't look after them.

This points out to the fact that co- residence with married sons gives them a feeling of security. Moreover, it is also known during the survey that co-residence with married sons/ children are often an assurance of the necessary security at old age, especially in terms of health care and financial security that they require at this age. While comparatively analysing the situation, it is revealed that co-residence of the elderly women with their married children in case of poor families (both with married sons and daughters) are mostly found in case where she is a widow. However, only 8% of presently married women are known to reside with their married children along with their spouse in these families. On the other hand, though in case elderly widow belonging to the middle class families the rate of residing with married children is found to be equally true but as compared to the poor families (8%) a much higher number of presently married elderly women are found to live together with their married children as well as both their married and unmarried children along with their spouse (26%). This findings on the one hand reflects dependency of the elderly women on their married children in the absence of their husband, irrespective of their class and on the other hand it points out to the better relationship and acceptance that the elderly women of the middle class families enjoy with their children, in comparison to their poor counterparts.

It is interesting to note that in poor families however, many instances are found where the elderly woman stays alone or with spouse (if married) in a completely separate arrangement, though shares the same residential compound with her married son/s. A significant number of elderly women i.e. 14% in case of middle class families as compared to 12% elderly women of poor families who are married are found to be living with their husband alone. In case of middle class families, either the children of these women are settled in some other city/ state or country or they have only daughters who are married off and presently staying in their matrimony. On the other hand, in case of poor families most of the women staying with their husband alone reports

not to have good relationship with their children neither do they receive any kind of support from them.

Quite a small number of respondents i.e. 4% belonging to the poor families as compared to 2% of middle class are found to be living alone. It should also be noted that, the elderly women is widow, in all such cases where she is found to be living alone. Apart from these, in the middle class families 6% elderly women co-reside with their relatives. It is worth mentioning that in both these cases, the elderly women are either widows or single/unmarried/separated.

Table: 2.8: Living Arrangements of the elderly women (in percentage).

Living Arrangements	Middle class	Poor families	Total %
Alone	2	4	3
With Husband	14	12	13
With Husband and unmarried /separated/divorced children	4	16	10
With Husband and married children	16	8	12
With Husband and both married and unmarried children	10	0	5
With married Son/s	34	38	36
With married Daughter/s	4	2	3
Both with married and unmarried children	6	12	8
With unmarried/separated/divorced/widowed children	4	10	7
Relatives	6	0	3
Total	50	50	100

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