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Elderly Economic Active Population in Tamil Nadu: A Gender Glance into 2011 Census Data

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ABSTRACT

An attempt is made here to analyse and discuss selected aspects of elderly (60+ years) persons' participation in economic activities across their gender background making use of the 2011 Census data for Tamil Nadu. 36.35% of elderly persons, in Tamil Nadu, are reported to be main workers and another 7.35% stated to be marginal workers. The corresponding figures for male elderly are higher (51.93% and 8.28%, respectively) than their female counterparts (21.52 and 6.52%, respectively). Among main workers, while about a higher percentage of the elderly women as against men are 'Agricultural Labourers' (48.6% *vs.* 28.5%), men outnumbered women in the case of 'Cultivators' (26.1% *vs.* 20.8%). Likewise, elderly women's participation (as compared to men's) noted to be more in two of the occupational divisions, *viz.*, 'Elementary Occupations' and 'Workers not Classified by Occupations'. Elderly women's share (as against men's) is also higher among 'Employees' and 'Family Workers'. Among non-workers, elderly women are mostly 'Dependents' and engaged in 'Household Duties'.

Key Words : Elderly, Economically Active Population, Gender, Tamil Nadu, 2011 Census

INTRODUCTION

During old age, elderly persons (60 years and above) are mostly expected to live peacefully and spend time in a fruitful manner with the support of their children / grand children and/or with savings / pension from their income generating activities during their working ages. However, in many less developed counties, in the absence of suitable social security measures, in addition to appropriate savings schemes and meager amounts of old age pensions, majority of the aged persons either fully / partially depend upon their children and/or at times siblings or landlords, etc. But some of the less developed countries, including India, are in the process of later stage of demographic transition and thereby, on the one side, the number of children itself is less to look after their parents in old age and on the other side, even such children are mostly migrate to nearby towns / cities for their jobs / employment and/or education. Such phenomenon forces the elderly persons to earn income by participating in one or the other economic / income generating activities. Moreover, such economic participation differs widely across their gender background. In fact, there are examples of elderly women forced to participate in income generating activities during old age, who might have not worked till their working ages, so as to meet their day-to-day livelihood (Audinarayana, 2001; 2016).

In India, some of the states have achieved demographic transition, by which the elderly populations of certain states have increased in number. Tamil Nadu, next to Kerala, achieved such status as early as in 1996 and thereby, the elderly population has started to increase, especially from 1991 onwards. In this process, the elderly persons have started to participate more in number than expected, especially in the case of females (women). For example, the work participation rate (in %) of the elderly men reported in 1991 census is 56.5, which has decreased to 53.5 by 2001 and then to 51.9 by 2011 census. On the

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other hand, the corresponding rate has increased in the case of elderly women from 17.7 in 1991 to 18.4 by 2001 and 21.5 by 2011 (Audinarayana, 2016). Keeping this scenario in mind, in this paper, an attempt is made to look into the extent of economically active participation and its related aspects of the elderly persons across their gender background, in addition to the share of elderly workers across industrial categories and occupational divisions and also the activities of the non-workers, based on the 2011 Census data for Tamil Nadu state.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study has been drawn from 2011 Census, Tamil Nadu state, which is available in electronic mode – Excel format. All the data related to economic activities of the population are available under the heading *'Data on Workers'* in different table formats with B-Series (censusindia.gov.in). While making use of such data one should clearly understand the definitions of various concepts related to economically active population, since they vary from census to census. Because of this limitation, in this chapter, an attempt is made to analyse the data pertaining to only Census, 2011 rather than on comparative basis over a period of time. Further, though a number of tables are available on economically active population, cross-classification of such data is limited to only some aspects of elderly population across their gender, which are analysed here. Simple percentages are the statistics used here.

As stated earlier in order to comprehend the central theme under consideration, an understanding of some of the definitions followed in 2011 Census is very much essential and therefore, such definitions are provided in the following lines (RGCCI, 2011).

Work:

"*...Participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit.* Such participation may be physical or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work, but also includes effective supervision and direction of work. *It even includes part time help or unpaid work on farm, family enterprise or in any other activity.* The important point to be noted is that the activity should be economically productive."

Reference Period:

"*For all questions on workers and non-workers, the reference period is one year preceding the date of enumeration*. Certain types of work such as agriculture, household industry like, *gur* making, etc., are carried on either throughout the year or only during certain seasons or parts of the year, depending on the local circumstances. In such cases, the reference period is the broad time-span of the agricultural seasons preceding the enumeration and therefore, the definition of economic activity taken into account not only the current status, but also all the economic activities pursued by the person during the entire reference period. In fact, the reference period plays a crucial role in categorising the workers as *Main Workers* and *Marginal Workers"*.

Main workers:

A person who has worked (or participated in any economically productive work) for 6 months or more, *i.e.*, 183 days or more in a year during the last one year (reference period) is termed as '*Main Worker*'.

Marginal workers:

All those who worked in the preceding year of enumeration for less than six months, *i.e.*, less than 183 days, are classified as *'Marginal Workers'*.

Non-workers:

All those persons who reported as that they did not work at all during the last one year (during reference period) are treated as *'Non-Workers'*.

Seeking / Available for work:

All those persons who have got themselves registered in the employment exchange or may applying for jobs or made other efforts to a job, such a looking for in the news paper advertisements with a view to apply for a job with an intension to offer themselves for employment.

In addition to these definitions, there are a few exceptional conditions, which have been enquired in detail and taken an appropriated decision as per the instructions provided by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India in its manual (RGCCI, 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Elderly workers and non-workers by their gender and place of residence:

An analysis of data on distribution of population by

workers, marginal workers and non-workers (Table 1) reveals that, in Tamil Nadu state, as a whole, 36.65 per cent of the elderly persons (60+ years) is said to be as main workers (engaged in one or the other economic activity for more than 183 days during the reference period), 7.35 per cent as marginal workers and the rest 56.3 per cent are non-workers. It is conspicuous to note that, while the percentage of main workers is much higher, about 2.5 times, in the case of elderly men as against their women counterparts (51.93 *vs.* 21.52). Such pattern is also true to a little extent in the case of marginal workers – 8.28 *vs.* 6.52. On the other hand, it is obvious to note that the percentage of non-workers is found to be higher among the elderly women as against their main counterparts (71.96 *vs.* 39.84). Further, the percentage of those working about 3-6 months (marginal workers) is much higher among elderly men than among their women counterparts (6.9 *vs.* 5.3), such pattern is somewhat negligible in the case of those who are working for 3 months or less during the reference period (1.38 *vs.* 1.30). Another point to be observed here is that while about a small proportion of the elderly are 'seeking / available for work' among the marginal workers (1.05), such proportion is somewhat higher among men than women (1.25 *vs.* 0.86). On the other hand, while about less than one per cent of the elderly among non-workers expressed as 'seeking / available for work' (0.82), such proportion is somewhat higher among the elderly women as against men (1.09 *vs.* 0.65).

Elderly main workers by Industrial Categories:

Analysis of data about elderly main workers by industrial categories is provided in Table 2. The results highlight that, on the whole, a little over one-third of the elderly persons (34.6%) reported as 'Agricultural Labourers' and about one-fourth of them (24.7%) stated as 'Cultivators'. The next in that order are: those engaged in 'Arts, Entertainment and Recreation / other service activities, Household Employers, Activities of Extra-Territorial Organisations / Bodies' followed by 'Wholesale and Retail Trade / Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motor Cycles' and 'Manufacturing in Non-household Industry' (8.4%, 6.9 and 6.8%, respectively). The percentages of those involved in other major industrial categories vary in the range of 3.2% - 4.6%). Across gender-wise, more or less, similar patterns exist with the following exceptions. While in the case of 'Agricultural Labourers', the share of elderly women as against men is substantially higher (48.6% *vs.* 28.5%), the reverse pattern is noted in the case of 'Cultivators' to a fair extent (26.1% for men and 20.8% for women). Likewise, while elderly men tend to be higher extent in all the other industrial categories under consideration, women outnumbered men to a little extent in the case of 'Arts, Entertainment and Recreation / other service activities, Household Employers, Activities of Extra-Territorial Organisations / Bodies' (9.0% *vs.* 8.1%) and 'Manufacturing in Household Industry' (4.2% *vs.* 2.9%). Such pattern is obvious because of social and cultural norms of not sending women outside their home, in addition to easy access to such works.

Elderly workers by Occupational Divisions:

In Indian Censuses, information about the distribution of main workers other than 'Cultivators' and 'Agricultural Labourers' is used to be provided by major occupational divisions across their gender background. Results based on the analysis of such data are presented in Table 3. From this Table, it is clear that a simple majority of the elderly persons (22.5%) are engaged in occupational division of 'Elementary Occupations' such as Sales and Services, and Labourers in Plantation, Livestock, Fisheries, Mining, Construction, Manufacturing

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Elderly by Type of Economic Activity across their Gender Background, Tamil Nadu, 2011

Type of Economic Activity	Persons	Men	Women
Main Workers	36.35	51.93	21.52
Marginal Workers	7.35	8.28	6.52
Less than 3 Months	1.34	1.38	1.30
3 – 6 Months	6.01	6.90	5.22
Seeking / Available for Work	1.05	1.25	0.86
Non Workers	56.30	39.84	71.96
Seeking / Available for Work	0.82	0.65	1.09
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(75,09,758)	(36,61,226)	(38,48,532)

and Transport sectors, Street Vendors including Food / non-food products Vendors, Door-to-door Telephone Sales Workers, etc. closely followed by 'Craft and Related Trades Work' (19.4%) like Extraction and Building, Metal, Machinery, Precision, Handicrafts and Related Trades works and 'Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers' (16.1%), which includes works pertaining to Personal and Protective Services' and 'Models, Sales Persons and Demonstrators. Further, a sizeable percentage of elderly persons (17.0%) are engaged in 'Works that are Not Classified by Specific Occupations'. While a little over 5 per cent each of the elderly are working as 'Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers' (5.6%) such as Stationary and Mobile-Plant Operators, Drivers, Machine Operators and Assemblers, which are said to be somewhat risky, and 'Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers' that include Market oriented Skilled and Subsistence related to Agricultural and Fishery works (5.6%). On the other hand, the share of elderly persons who work in the so-called white-collar occupational divisions like 'Legislators, Officials and Managers', 'Professionals', 'Technicians and Associate Professionals' and also the share of 'Clerks" is comparatively much less – the percentages

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Elderly Main Workers by Industrial Categories across their Gender Background, Tamil Nadu, 2011

Industrial Categories	Persons	Men	Women
Cultivators	24.66	26.12	20.75
Agricultural Labourers	34.60	28.48	48.64
Plantation, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, etc.	3.83	4.11	3.18
Manufacturing in Household Industry	3.28	2.91	4.15
Manufacturing in Non-Household Industry	6.84	7.85	4.33
Construction	3.79	4.36	2.54
Wholesale and Retail Trade / Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motor Cycles	6.93	8.43	3.49
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation / Other Service Activities / As Household Employers/ Activities of Extra-Territorial Organisations and Bodies	8.39	8.12	9.00
B, D, E, H & I	3.22	4.04	1.32
J, K, L, M, N, O & P	4.56	5.50	2.42
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(27,30,315)	(19,01,650)	(8,28,665)

Note: Industrial Categories: B – Mining and Quarrying, D – Electricity, Gas, steam and Air conditioning Supply, E – Water Supply (Sewerage, Waste Management and remediation activities), H – Transportation and Storage, and I – Accommodation and food service activities. J – Information and Communication, K – Financial and Insurance activities, L – Real Estate activities, M – Professional, Scientific and Technical activities, N – Administrative and support service activities, O – Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security & P – Education.

Table 3 : Percentage Distribution of Elderly Main Workers by Occupational Divisions across their Gender Background, Tamil Nadu, 2011

Occupational Divisions	Persons	Men	Women
Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers	4.78	5.62	1.91
Professionals	3.79	4.41	1.72
Technicians and Associate Professionals	2.95	3.18	2.14
Clerks	2.16	2.62	0.60
Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers	16.14	17.33	12.10
Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers	5.62	5.70	5.36
Craft and Related Trades Workers	19.43	19.83	18.08
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	5.62	5.71	5.31
Elementary Occupations	22.53	21.15	27.21
Workers Not Classified by Occupations	16.98	14.45	25.56
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(11,15,280)	(8,61,594)	(2,53,686)

fall in the range of 4.8% - 2.2%. Such low participation in these occupational divisions may be due to fact that most of these occupations would be positioned in the Government / public establishments wherein the age at retirement (58 or 60 years) is strictly followed and thereby, few of them only after retirement from formal jobs may continue to work either by self-interest or those who do not have sufficient income / pension from their jobs in which they are engaged till the age of retirement.

Though the patterns of distribution of elderly main workers in various occupational divisions across their gender background are mostly on the similar line as observed in the case of total elderly persons, differentials do exist to some extent. While the percentage of those who are stated to be in 'Elementary Occupations' and 'Workers that are Not Classified by Specific Occupations' are higher among elderly women as against men (27.2% and 25.6% *vs.* 14.5% and 21.2%), elderly men outnumbered their women counterparts in the case of the occupational divisions such as 'Craft and Related Works' and 'Service Works and Shop and Market Sales Workers' (19.8% and 17.3% *vs.* 18.1% and 12.1%). On the other hand, among all the other occupational divisions under consideration, the extent of participation of men elderly is higher as compared to the women and such pattern is more conspicuous in the case of those occupational divisions that are coined as modern sector occupational divisions (first four Divisions). Relatively less education, family commitment and socio-cultural norms / traditions could be the factors / reasons for such low shares of women in modern occupations, besides less experience and need / demand for their services.

Elderly main workers by class of worker:

In Indian Censuses, main workers in non-household industry are used to be classified by class of worker, viz., employer, employee, single worker and family worker. Results based on the analysis of such data have been depicted in Table 4. The data exhibits that a large majority of the elderly persons (72.4%) are employees, *i.e.*, who work for salary and/or wages in cash or kind with an employer (or establishments), whereas a sizeable percentage of them reported to be single workers, who are said to be engaged in own business, profession and or service without employing others. While about 6.8 per cent of the elderly reported to be employers, who hires one or more persons in his business / establishment for work / employment for wages / salaries (but they do not draw salary), just about 4 per cent of the elderly categorised as family workers, who work mostly in a family enterprise / business / manufacturing / services, etc. with other members of the family without wages / salary. Almost similar patterns in class of workers are observed in the case of total elderly persons have also been noticed across their gender background with the following minor exceptions. It is conspicuous to note that while the percentages of elderly women stated to be 'employees' and 'family workers' are higher than their men counterparts (77% and 5.6% *vs.* 71.2% and 3.5%), elderly men outnumbered women in the case of 'single workers' and 'employers' (17.1% and 8% *vs.* 15.3% and 2.2%).

Elderly non-workers by main activity:

The Census of India used to provide the information about the main activity of all the non-workers (excluding the main workers and marginal workers). An analysis of such data (Table 5) gives an understanding about their dependency level and/or other major activities in which they are engaged for earning incomes mostly for their livelihood and/or support of their children and other dependents.

Information presented in Table 5 suggests that more than half of the elderly persons (53.3%) are 'Dependents', which is mostly on expected lines, since the data is related to aged persons who are generally not able to participate in economically activities and/or not engaged in work after retirement (58 or 60 years) at the

Table 4 : Percentage Distribution of Elderly Main Workers in Non-Household Industry by Class of Worker across their Gender Background, Tamil Nadu, 2011

Class of Worker	Persons	Men	Women
Employer	6.80	8.01	2.17
Employees	72.42	71.24	76.93
Single Workers	16.76	17.13	15.33
Family Workers	4.02	3.62	5.56
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(9,99,845)	(7,92,391)	(2,07,454)

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Elderly Non-Workers by Main Activity across their Gender Background, Tamil Nadu, 2011			
Main Activity of Non-Workers	Persons	Men	Women
Students	0.71	0.79	0.67
Household Duties	21.55	2.72	31.48
Dependents	53.28	50.02	54.87
Pensioners	17.95	32.91	10.07
Rentiers	1.31	2.09	0.89
Beggars, Vagrants, etc.	0.06	0.11	0.04
Others	5.22	11.36	1.98
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(42,28,180)	(14,58,790)	(27,69,390)

time of reference period due to non-availability of suitable job, ill health, illiterate and/or not willing to work. Another sizeable percentage of the elderly persons (21.6%) are stated to be looking after 'Household Duties', which highlights the fact that even at old age some of these elderly persons extend their services in performing day-to-day household chores like cooking, cleaning utensils, looking after children, fetching water, collecting firewood, going to market, etc. It is conspicuous to note that about 18 per cent of the elderly non-workers are reported to be 'Pensioners', persons who are drawing pension after retirement from service and is doing no other work, *i.e.*, note employed again in some work or not engaged in some other work such as cultivation, business, trade, etc. Next to these, a small proportion of elderly persons are noted as 'Others' (5.2%) such as persons who are in jails or inmates of penal, mental or charitable institutions doing no paid work, persons who are seeking/available for work, Prostitutes, persons having unidentified source of income and those with unspecified sources of subsistence not engaged in any economically productive work. On the other hand, negligible proportions of elderly persons are reported to be as 'Rentiers' (1.3%) – persons living on remittances, agricultural or non-agricultural royalty, interest or dividend, 'Students' (0.7%) – all those taking part-time classes, corresponding courses, attending literacy centres, etc., who are not engaged in any economically productive work, and 'Beggars, Vagrants, etc.' (0.06%). An examination of gender differentials in main activity status of non-workers shows that the percentages of elderly women as compared to their men counterparts are strikingly higher in reporting to be busy with 'Household Duties' (31% vs. 2.7%) and also to some extent in the case of 'Dependents' (55% vs. 50%). On the other hand, in the case of the rest of the main activities under consideration the shares of elderly men are higher than the women, especially such pattern is more pertinent with regard to those stated as 'Pensioners' (33% vs. 10%), which is obvious because men generally work in fairly large number in jobs / employment, which are mostly attached with pensions, and also as 'Others' (11.4% *vs.* 2%).

Conclusions and Implications:

An examination of economically active population of the elderly persons (60 years and above) enumerated during 2011 Census in Tamil Nadu state showed that a substantial per cent of them (43.7%) are participating in income generating activities (main workers and marginal workers) and obviously, elderly men to a higher extent than women (60.3% and 28%), instead of enjoying the fruits of their work related activities before they attain age 60 years. Another noteworthy point observed is that around 1-2 per cent of the elderly persons, irrespective of their gender background are seeking / available for work even at that age. Some of the reasons for such willingness to work are: the poverty conditions prevailing at their family level, in addition to the absence of social security policies, lack of own savings while working and/ or support from their children during old age. Moreover, in the case of women elderly, socio-cultural factors, by and large, discourage them to work in old age, besides less education, ill health, etc.

Among elderly main workers of Tamil Nadu, a large majority reported to be 'Agricultural Labourers', especially in the case of elderly women followed by 'Cultivators'. It is natural that the state being an agricultural dominated, it is somewhat easy and less complicated to elderly women to enter into agricultural related works. Elderly women also reported to be engaged to a higher extent (compared to their men counterparts) in industrial categories like 'Arts, Entertainment and

Recreation / Other Service Activities / Household Employers / Activities of Extra-Territorial Organisations and Bodies' and 'Manufacturing in Household Industry'. Likewise, higher shares of elderly persons in general and women in particular are found in the occupational divisions like 'Elementary Occupations' closely followed by 'Workers not Classified by Occupations', 'Crafts and related' and 'Service Workers and Shop Market Sales Workers'. Gender-specific preferences in such works and meager wage structure could be the major reasons for such patterns.

Among the main workers in non-household industry, a large majority of the elderly in general and elderly women in particular reported to be 'Employees', whereas a sizeable percentage of them are stated as 'Single Workers' – mostly self-employed (men little higher than women). In the case of elderly non-workers, majority of them are 'Dependents', followed by those engaged in 'Household Duties' and 'Pensioners'. However, while elderly women outnumbered men in the first two types of activities (especially in the case of 'Household Activities'), elderly men share is higher among 'Pensioners' than their women counterparts. All these findings suggest that elderly persons (especially men) in Tamil Nadu, by and large, continue to work in their old age to a fairly higher extent, but mostly in less-paid jobs. Conversely, elderly women are mostly enumerated as 'Dependents' and restricted to 'Household Duties' Among those elderly working, women are mostly engage themselves in rural based 'Agricultural Labourers' followed by 'Cultivators', besides 'Elementary Occupations', which provide little or less income.

Based on the aforesaid conclusions, some of the following policy implications are suggested for the benefit of the elderly persons so as to live in a decent manner in their fag end of their life.

1. Taking into account the occupations in which elderly people are more interested and their work experience, appropriate work programmes, *viz.,* part-time and regular jobs, may be initiated in future.

2. Depending upon the need / demand as well as viability, age at retirement of workers may be increased from 58 / 60 years to 60 / 62 and even up to 65 years in due course for selected employees.

3. Suitable social security schemes like pension for those working in public and private establishments, and old age pension may be increased to a reasonable level.

4. Efforts may be taken to motivate the children (both sons and daughters as well as sons-in-law and daughters-in-law) to take care of their elderly parents / parents-in-law by providing dependent allowance and tax rebates wherever there is need and possibility.

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