

Factors Influencing the Living Arrangements of the Elderly in Sri Lanka

Manori K. Weeratunga and Lakshman Dissanayake

Department of Demography, University of Colombo

This study examines the living arrangements of the elderly because they are affected by the changing role of the family and in turn such arrangements can have an impact on the well-being of the elderly. As the population in Sri Lanka ages, issues surrounding support and care of the elderly population need attention. Different types of living arrangements can place pressure on demand for formal and informal support systems because of competing demands for scarce resources. This paper explores the changes in the living arrangements of the elderly and factors influencing such changes and their effects on the well-being of the elderly. The sample of this study consisted of both the urban and rural elderly population. The simple random sample technique was used to select 300 elderly persons based on their living arrangements. This study found that a substantial proportion of the elderly live in their own home but with adult offspring. In addition, many offspring move away from their parents' home after marriage and tend to live in close proximity. The study further found that more elderly women than elderly men live alone and the majority of them are widowed because of the higher life expectancy of females over their male counterparts. Moreover, a significant proportion of the elderly living alone or living with a spouse encountered difficulties because of not having children to take care of them as they age. It was also revealed that having a larger number of children gave a higher chance for the elderly to co-reside with offspring. This study further found that co-residence has eased the financial burden of the elderly. In terms of expenditure on health, it was found that those in poor health seem to be co-residing, especially with an adult offspring in their own home, and they tend to be involved in more social activities because of the support of their co-residing offspring.

Keywords: Elderly population, Living arrangements, Co-residence with offspring