

## Assessing the well-being of India's Elderly: Applying Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

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*Well-being is an inexplicit concept- hard to define and conceptualise, and even harder to operationalize. Composite measures using macro level data are no doubt important as they provide a broader picture but they can only give little insights on individual well-being. The current study is an attempt to bridge this gap by conducting an assessment of the well-being of India's elderly by applying Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. Since the indicators used as a proxy for the respective functioning achievements in each domain are of a mixed nature, an Optimal Scaling method is performed in order to identify the principal components of overall well-being which allows variables to be scaled at different levels as a result of non-linear relationships between them can be modelled. For comparison across the well-being domains, the fuzzy set approach has been employed that handles continuous and ordinal variables simultaneously, and is generally used in the capability approach for micro-level analysis. By disaggregating the overall well-being score by age and sex, the grim scenario of gender disparity in later life is evident across major domains, thus throwing light on the cultural paradox which still persists in India.*

*“The well-being of a person can be seen in terms of the quality of life (the “well-ness”, as it were) of the person's being. Living may be seen as consisting of a set of interrelated ‘functionings’, consisting of beings and doings. A person's achievement in this respect can be seen as the vector of his or her functionings. The relevant functionings can vary from such elementary things as being adequately nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality, etc., to more complex achievements such as being happy, having self-respect, taking part in the life of the community and so on. The claim is that functionings are constitutive of a person's being, and an evaluation of well-being has to take the form of an assessment of these constitutive elements.”*  
- Sen, 1992:39

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