



Ageing as a Challenging and Stressful Phase of Life: An Analysis of Old Aged People in Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT: Ageing is more often connected with an increased morbidity and functional disabilities too. The gradual decrease in energy, acceptance of changing social setup and portraying up of older people as a burden on the financial resources proves very chaotic and stressful for the family in general and aged people in particular. It is observed that successful resolution of psychological crisis stage is ultimately related to the satisfaction of life and the successful or healthy ageing too, however the unfortunate thing here is that the pain and the suffering associated with age tend to be neglected most of the times and so their life satisfaction. The study therefore is a micro level psychosocial analysis of old age people from Jammu and Kashmir. It also includes chronicity of multiple health conditions and the reflection of the inadequacies provided to the old aged people in the later stages of life..

Keywords: Ageing; Morbidity; Social setup; Chronicity; Jammu and Kashmir.

INTRODUCTION: The concept of ageing is a natural process witnessed by everyone in his life; however the problem of acceptance of change in one's life is not so much natural. Ageing is more often connected with an increased morbidity and functional disabilities too. The gradual decrease in energy, non acceptance of changing social setup and portraying up of older people as a burden on the financial resources proves very chaotic and stressful for the family in general and aged people in particular. It involves a constant set of changes in behavior with the parameters of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, happiness or grief and then having a successful or an unsuccessful ageing. Different cultures express age in different ways. However mainly it is described as an unavoidable gradual process of body deterioration and the best way to approach it is increasing association with others, managing one's negative behaviour and problem solving through change in lifestyles. It is more about the experiences that shape whom we are and what we become. Staab and Hodges (1996) define ageing as the assembly of changes taking place in individuals within their lifespan. Birren and Schaie (2006) state that ageing is a long-term process requiring a continuous adjustment and the age-related changes can be slow or fast stemming predominantly from an individual and the circumstances around. Atchley (1989) states that ageing intensifies various chronic health conditions, disability, and decreasing up the cognitive functions like short-term memory and learning speed. It is a period in life in which one cannot not adapt properly to what he had previously adapted to. In the field of sociology and mental health, ageing is seen in five different

views like ageing as maturity, ageing as decline, ageing as a life-cycle event, ageing as generation, and ageing as survival. Positive correlates with ageing often include economics, employment, marriage, children, education, and sense of control, as well as many others (c.f. Traditional aging theories: which ones are useful by Michelitsch, J. W. and Michelitsch, T. M.). Age is not only a biological function of the total lived years nor the physiological changes occurring in the body during the life course, but is a product of social norms and expectations applicable on every other stage in life.

Care of old people is covertly or overtly directed by some theoretical assumptions about old age. Each theory informs about older people and points out the ways to respond to them. These theories of ageing have influenced society with different views on the process of ageing and the way of catering the needs of older people. The Psychosocial theories of ageing explain human development and ageing as changes in cognitive functions, behaviour, roles, relationships, coping ability and social changes in an individual. These theories provide different perspectives on the process of ageing. However, theories on successful ageing have an influence on nursing as the care and treatment of older people is affected by the society directly or indirectly. Baltes and Carstensen (1996) defined successful aging as the maximization and attainment of positive outcomes and the minimization or avoidance of negative outcomes. Douglas and Schmucker (2005) state that ageing does not lead people to death but may lead to the breaking up of immu-

nity barrier and weakening of physical ability. It may sometimes lead to the diseases or stressors to invade the body system. However George (1981, 1986) has come up with the concept of life satisfaction and describe life satisfaction as a global assessment of life quality, derived from comparison of one's aspirations to his or her actual conditions of life. The life satisfaction leads to the idea of successful ageing and the successful aging denotes the resilience of individuals in succeeding to attain a positive balance between gains and losses during the aging process. Ageing and Challenges in ageing are often used together. The diminished physical ability and dependence on some external agency for some support and help run very parallel to each other. The challenges related to elderly are too many and can be categorized under multiple categories like biological, medical, physical or psychosocial. It is about the weakness of physical health linked to the changes in body system with Kim et al. (2009) taking mental disability, breaking down of vital organs, vision loss, muscle weakness, and low level of bone strength as main parameters. Process of ageing makes the body system start to diminish in functionality and bring challenges influenced by deep psychological processes. Loneliness and depression are serious mental health problems which occur during ageing and limit the satisfaction of life and adjustment with the challenges of life. Blazer (2003) too says that a large proportion of the older population struggles with psychological distress. It is also observed that the issue of financial insecurity and social security sometimes prove very devastating with the effects of alienation and being dependent among the elderly aged people in Jammu and Kashmir. The study shows that the comparative lack of power and control of elderly people leads to identity crisis initially and a state of powerlessness later. Environmental gerontologists assert with growing age, people increasingly become more attached to the place where they live and become more sensitive to their social and physical environment. However the study reflects that the process of migration and move from native place to some other place becomes an important reason of mental suffering and unsatisfied social life as the adjustment to new environment and new people is never an easy job to do. The study reveals that giving up the old experiences, connected relations and developing the new ones becomes the reason of confusion and chaos among them. Since the physical frailty renders them dependent for small needs on some external agency and therefore sometimes they easily become targets for any type of abuse, be it physical, social or the verbal one. Elder abuse means an intentional deprivation of any older person of care and support needed to him or her.

The elderly may be subject to many different types of problems and most of the times, these problems are underreported. Studies reveal that mostly older women were found to be victims of multiple social, physical and verbal problems and abuse than their male counterparts. Acierno (2010) in his study mentions that 5.2 percent of respondents reported about the financial abuse, 5.1 percent said they'd been neglected, and 4.6 endured emotional abuse. The problem of neglect is yet another emotional problem mostly found to persist among the elderly people. The least participation in social gatherings, decision making or any other family or social participations make them feel alienated and aloof, thereby leading to the problem of depression and anxiety among them and have a dead mental capital.

METHODOLOGY: This study was conducted among the individuals above 65 years with the help of an interview schedule and the nature of sampling has been the purposive one with total sample strength of 17. The main objectives of the study revolve around the understanding up of psychosocial condition of elderly people and the gravity of problems and inadequacies faced by the elderly people in district Anantnag of Jammu and Kashmir. Responses were suitable for a subsequent quantitative analysis and the additional qualitative data were obtained through open questions. An observational analysis has also been the main tool to assemble the data and interpret both symbolic and non symbolic interactions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Society and psychosocial analysis of old aged people in Jammu and Kashmir: Society is a core institution making the concept of ageing to be discussed very frequently. The subject of ageing is traced in society more in number i.e, number of years lived rather than more of appearance and the exact condition of health. Sociologists consider about how the changing roles and relationships impact on older adults ability to adapt, adjust and examine the interdependence between older adults and society. Riley (1978) too mentions that aging is a lifelong process entailing maturation, change on physical, psychological, and social levels. It includes a pre set order of life events with a physical and mental maturation. At each phase in life, an individual leaves the previous role, assumes new one with new institutions or situations and a revised self-definition. Age-related roles and identities also vary according to social determinations significantly reflecting ageing as a social phenomenon than of biological only. The Continuity theory mentions about the maintenance of social equilibrium in

which it is found that elderly rarely change their lifestyles, behaviors, or identities, Instead they do make certain specific choice of consistency maintenance both in internal and external personality structures. Sociability plays an important role in protecting people from the psychological distress and enhancing the well-being too. Social isolation is a major risk factor for functional difficulties in older persons. Loss of important relationships can lead to feelings of emptiness and depression. The study also reflects that individuals involved with a positive and lively relationship tend to be less affected by everyday problems and have a better sense of control and independence. Warnick (1995) also mentions that adjusting to the changes that accompany old age requires that an individual is flexible and develops new coping skills to adapt to the changes. The Sociology of suffering has come up with a certain sociological thought and analysis towards witnessing and relieving social suffering of aged people.

The elderly people are seen to owe a special place and status in a family as the power and authority is mostly held by the oldest member of family in Jammu and Kashmir. Study shows that elderly still have an influence on the institution of family and their existence is respected and their experience given a due regard. It is observed that psychological and sociological factors have a significant influence on how well individuals age is. Although the phenomenon of industrialization and urbanization has led to little bit diminishing up of social standing of the elderly and a changing social structure is seen. The normal social setup which includes the ties of family or work places has also come under a transition. The economies are shifted from agrarian to industrial setup and younger generations are found moving to cities for work and the trend of living apart from grown children although has become commonplace but still the study about the social conditions reveal that a genuine concern for the elders is observed from their immediate concerns. Erikson's (1959) in his stage theory says that a major challenge of late life is to make up a balance in one's life. The condition of elderly people in Jammu and Kashmir although is not an unusual one as there too are similar challenges and same problems but the study reveals that children feel the responsibility towards the parents and try to stand by them when required besides the unparallel ideologies and approach towards life. The elderly are found to enter the later life or old age with certain honour and dignity, their by laying least room for the development of old age homes or any other such type of institutions. Erikson (1998) stated that old age brings new demands, difficulties and revaluations which can be possibly designated by a new ninth stage to clarify the challenges. The study also

shows that most of the times children try to cater the new needs and the demands of the aged parents in the state to re-evaluate their social life positively. Since at each stage, there is potential for crisis and conflict because of the radical change in perspective. The observational analysis of the respondents show that besides some negligible problems, most of the times children try to meet out the respective stage cycle of life with a respective state of intervention. The successful resolution of the eighth stage according to Erickson takes place when the individual has an ability to accept what has gone before as inevitable and satisfying, and also can accept the death without fear which may occur probably at any point of time and resulting in the ego integrity. However in case a person feels that his or her life has been an unsuccessful one and regrets for being too late to start, then he or she will be filled with despair. The study too reflects a successful life satisfaction among the old aged people in Jammu and Kashmir within certain respective stages of life. The family atmosphere is seen very conducive and adaptive with the changing social and physical behaviours of the old aged people in the state. However the problem of insurgency and ongoing conflict in the state shows a negative relation between the life satisfaction and the political environment of the state. The study reveals that ongoing conflict in the state has created deep negative impact on the mental health of the old aged people in the state while making them to suffer both physically and mentally. Some of the respondents reveal that they have lost their relatives and intimates while leaving a deep scar in their life which can never have a touch of heel and hide. These types of social situations are engraved so deep that amid the genuine and proper care of family and friends, they are not living a happy and satisfied life. The neighbourhood social environment has also been found to have an impact on mental health as the study shows that the relationship between the neighbourhood social environment contributes to better personal relationships and lively state of mind and body. Erikson (1967) too mentions that for normal development, the positive resolution of psychosocial health must persistently outweigh the negative resolutions of ill health which off course in Jammu and Kashmir is the social situation created around by the ongoing turmoil in the state.

CONCLUSION: Ageing is a process of declined health status by limiting the activity of the old people and Successful aging is about the perceived life satisfaction and healthy life style of the elderly person. Despite advances in policy and intervention programs, loneliness and depression remain critical problems among the elderly people mostly. The study although

reflects a satisfied life style of the aged people in the state but still the mental capital of the elderly is found in a suffering condition particularly due to the turmoil in the state. Although abuse to elderly people is not major social problem but the lag between the experienced social life and the experiencing social situations has created a state of psychological crisis in the life of elderly aged individuals in the state, thereby developing mental and emotional problems in them. Since ageing related changes comprise of multiple diseases occurring to the body system, It was also observed from the study that problems like depression, alienation and general weakness are very common with a broken defence mechanism barrier too. Therefore, all kinds of diseases easily gain access into such body system and in order to come out of these problems, older people need to be encouraged to do as much for themselves as possible. The Caregivers (possibly children or attendant) need to patiently allow sufficient time and independence to these persons and not confine them to certain boundaries of house or room. The emphasis should not be on perfection but on personal accomplishment and a holistic view of what contributes to aging successfully should be taken into main consideration as the study reflects that those who are most likely to age well have good physical and psychological health with a sound social support network and high levels of resilience. More over the emphasis on development of good mental capital is indispensable as higher levels of mental capital can help to mitigate the cognitive decline associated with old age.

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