

SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF ELDERLY IN KASHMIR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRINAGAR DISTRICT

Mohd Anzar Warr¹, Tarif Hamid Akhooon² & Zahoor Ahmad³

^{1,2}*Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India*

³*Research Scholar, Department of History, Baghwant University, Ajmer, India*

ABSTRACT

In today's contemporary society ageing is the most emerging demographic phenomenon. Asia has the largest number of the world's elderly 53% followed by Europe 25%. In 2050, 82% of the world's elderly will be in developing regions of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean while only 16% of them will reside in the developed regions of Europe and North America. Ageing is therefore rapidly emerging as the problem of developing countries particularly in Kashmir. In traditional Kashmiri society, the informal support systems of the family, kinship and the community are considered strong enough to provide social security to its members; including older people. Urbanization, industrialization and ongoing phenomenon of globalization have cast their shadow on traditional values and norms within the society. The many psychological, emotional problems of elderly influence the social functioning and well-being of individuals in different ways. This is evident from the various studies carried out in the area of sociology by various scholars throughout the world. The study has been carried out in Kashmir context and aimed to trace the various problems of elderly people in Kashmir. This paper attempts to examine the impact of conflict/turmoil on elderly in Kashmir and the socio-psychological problems of elderly in Kashmir. The paper is based on secondary sources of data and other relevant literature wherever necessary. The statement will also be supplanted by participant observation of the authors.

KEYWORDS: *Elderly, Socio-Psychological Problems, Kashmir*

Article History

Received: 06 Sep 2018 | Revised: 22 Oct 2018 | Accepted: 05 Nov 2018

INTRODUCTION

In India, the population of elderly people consists of 7 percent of the general population, in which two-third lives in village economy and almost half amongst in them live in extreme poverty and in pathetic conditions. It has been found that there is growth in a number of percentage of the older population in the Indian subcontinent that poses many issues and problems which must be taken care of if one has to attain the path of socio-economic development effectively. This is affected by the changes occurring in the social and economic conditions of the elderly people that adversely affect the living standard of people after retirement. The financial and monetary decline for elderly people starts when they retire from gainful employment. During their service, they feel satisfied with their job and income stability but when they retire there income becomes meager in the form of pension and their status transforms from that of salaried person to an old pensioner. Retirement for elderly people brings them unemployment which results in financial and economic dependency

on their children for day to day needs. They become independent to dependent ones due to loss of economic status. A sense of feeling of lower self-esteem prevails in elderly a person that is usually attributed to their loss of recognition in society and decreases their power, confidence, and status in community and society. During traditional times, elderly people enjoyed and occupied the powerful position and prestige within family and society but nowadays they are inactive, usually dependent for help, fragile and weak. This has led to an increase in many physical, psychological and sociological problems of elderly people. The mental status of a person is harmful. In near future, this stress related to elderly people needs to be taken care of effectively by medical practitioners because if it is not addressed earlier many health-related issues and problems will crop up

Though at present due to technical advancement in the field's general health, education, medicine, and medical facilities, national food-related schemes and food availability. There is a decrease in mortality rates of young age-related groups resulting in a continuous increase in the elderly population of people relating to the age group of sixty years and above. According to census 2011, the population is more than 1.21 billion people, with a proportion of the population of a country which is increasing at the rate of 1.41 percent. The expectation of life at birth has increased from about 32 years in 1941-51 to 62.8 years for males and 63.4 years for females in 1996-2001 and according to census, 2011 life expectancy at birth increased about 65.77 years for males and 67.95 years for females. On the one hand elderly population has increased over decades but on the other hand, society based support system has weakened and currently it is showing a decreasing trend.

Cause of the Problems of Elderly People

Old Age: Ageing in people is a natural process. However, it has its own disadvantages. Old age affects the physical and mental faculties of a person. The weakness and fragile health of the elderly people makes them soft and easy targets for robbers and also of the unfaithful family member towards them and also servants at home.

Health Factor: Health problems are prominent and most significant during old age. The problems like heart attack, respiratory problems, cough, paralysis etc., are more common among the elders. When the body becomes weak in immunity, resistance power becomes low and the body becomes breeding ground for several of diseases.

Psychological Factor: The psychological problems in older persons are generally connected with and after their retirement. A sudden change from a respectable powerful official life to a retired life free of daily tensions makes the people mentally weak. Frustration, neuroticism, psychosis, schizophrenia, hallucinations, etc psychological problems are developed in the elderly Neglect by family members: during old age family of a person is very important for him. If the family is ready to look after the elderly members willingly then the old age bears fruit and comfort. But if the family members think that the elderly persons are a beast of burden for them then it has a profound affects the elderly people both mentally and psychologically. The prolonged illness of elderly person will make the family members think of them as a burden especially when the elderly people are bedridden which usually restricts their mobility.

Generation Gap: There are a clash and contradiction between traditional and modern ways of thinking which results in ideological conflict between older and younger members in society. The older people find it contradicting to accept the values and standards of the new modern generation which increases differences between them. For example, the son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren like pizzas, burgers and pastas, they listen to pop music instead of classical Indian music, and they wear certain types of clothes which are totally disliked and condemned by the elderly people ideologically. The elderly people may express their disgust, resentment, and anguish either verbally or silently over the

certain issues and actions. They may even try to interfere into the affairs and activities of their grandchildren which are often refuted and disliked by grandchildren mostly.

Financial Factor: Financial and monetary issue is the root cause of the problems for elderly people during old age. Retirement from gainful employment brings financial, monetary dependency and burden to elderly people. Health problems during old age make it more aggravated and the considerable amount of money that was needed for other households chores and other expenditure is now spent on the medicines, appointments for doctors and treatment of disease mostly. This problem of inadequate income and financial instability affects the relationships of elderly individuals within the family settings.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Showkat, H. (2016): In this study titled “Need of old Age homes: A Sociological Study in Srinagar District” reveals that the need for the establishment of old age homes is of utmost importance. She points out that the elder’s people feel that their respect and dignity etc will be protected and secured in such a place. Similarly, the author admitted that also, in some of the cases elderly people living in nuclear families, where there are working women, need such a place for their day and daily care. The study depicts that the elderly belonging to upper-income group need old age homes due to many reasons like loneliness, least interaction and is even ready to pay for these homes. The majority of the elderly especially from middle and lower income groups wants to stay with their families. This is the consequence of the fact that the elderly from the former group have least interaction with family, neighbors or relatives and thus want to stay anywhere where there is someone who can talk with them. Although the care which they are getting at home from their servants is enough for their sustenance but in order to enjoy their remaining life, it is imperative for them to share their ideologies. Living in old age homes or daycare centers will help them to interact. Although, the author has conducted extensive research on elderly in the Srinagar district of Kashmir and she has taken 150 respondents.

Rafiq, M. Yasmeen, Ashfaq, Shalinder & Rifat (2016): In this work “Health Problems of the Elderly in Budgam District (J&K): A Cross-Sectional Study” reveal that the study highlights the health problems the geriatric population faced in Budgam District of J&K. the authors said that not much studies have been done in the study area, the study highlights the common health problems the elderly face. It is recommended that government agencies should carry out special surveys to identify the vulnerable aged and focus on deprivations suffered by them. The authors said that there is also need to sensitize the community at large and the opinion group leaders, about the health needs of the geriatric population with focus on females and widows. A cross-sectional study was done among 404 elderly in Budgam district (J&K) during November 2015 to June 2016 for eight months. The sample size was calculated using a standard statistical method and sampling was done by Cluster Random Sampling design. Data were collected on standardized a pre-tested questionnaire using face to face interview after getting consent from the elderly.

The Aim of the Present Paper is as Follow

- To examine the socio-psychological problems of the elderly in the study area
- To analyze the impact of turmoil/conflict on the elderly in the study area

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on secondary sources of data and other relevant literature wherever necessary. The statement will also be supplanted by participant observation of the authors. The experiences regarding being socio-psychological problems of elderly in Kashmir with special reference to Srinagar district.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study reveal that ageing has never been a problem for Indian sub-continent where there is still strong value- oriented joint family system is prevalent even now. Indian people and its culture is respectful and supportive of elderly people and Kashmiri society are also an example in this respect. Ageing as a phenomenon and emerging problem has all along invited the attention of the researchers throughout the world. The old age problem in Srinagar city is also aggravating due to many health's, physical, socio-psychological factors faced by elderly which need to be addressed. A provision for old age people in our society has become the important themes of our state. The problems pertaining to ageing significantly vary from one society to other and are multi-dimensional phenomenon. The disintegration of the joint family system and prevalence of nuclear family and the impact of the change in a economic system has brought into focus the peculiar problems which the elderly people now face in our state.

The authors observed in the study that in the traditional sense, the duty and obligation of the younger generation towards the older people is on the rapid decline which has created a sense of isolation, alienation among elderly people and they think they are unwanted and of no use because of their old age. The elderly people are stuck between a tug of war like situation. Within modern industrial and materialistic society, there is a decline in traditional values for elderly on one hand and the absence of an adequate financial and social security system in which elderly people find it difficult to adjust themselves in the familial and societal settings.

It has been observed by the study that the elderly people in Srinagar city not only face many physical and health problems but social and psychological problems mostly depression, lack of social interaction, loneliness, isolation which are the result of their declining health and being old and unwanted and non productive beings old age brings impairment in hearing, speech, vision memory and locomotor ability these impairments compound discomfort, loss of pleasure and add and aggravate social and psychological problems. Older people in Srinagar city feel the burden and dependent on others for the fulfillment of their needs and they feel ageing starts when one is retired or detached from job or professional life. Majority of elderly people in Srinagar city had health problems such as hypertension followed by arthritis, diabetes, asthma, cataract, anemia but the widespread problem of that of elderly was stress, anxiety, blood pressure, and hypertension. Many elderly revealed that the attitude of others like their relatives and neighbors towards them was that of neglect. Majority of elderly were not happy in life except those who were taken care by their nears and dears and whose children had well settled and stayed with them and they had spend their previous life happily without economic hardships. But they always complained of fear psychosis because of a conflict situation.

Similarly, it has been analyzed during the study that conflict situation in Kashmir has also been a key role factor ultimately for the expression of feelings of the elderly people living within the joint families had better position compared to those elderly persons who usually stayed alone without family members. Better social relations were maintained by the members of the family with older people because they had regular interaction, expressions of feelings and support from their family. The current position and general expression of the elderly persons were that they were living a lonely life in

an utter state of isolation from society because of their ill health and restricted mobility. They had feelings of depression and anxiety and also felt dissatisfied with the course of life they were living. Because of negligence and lack of interaction. In this context, the need for preserving our tradition of a joint family and the mutual cooperation and understanding between the younger and the older people could be more of a blessing.

The need of the hour and the current situation of elderly must invite the attention of members of community and societal and religious institutions and organizations and voluntary individuals of Ngo groups not only to understand but also to solve the problems resulting of elderly people by frequent visits developing interactions with them and this emerging problem needs utmost interventions from all segments of society and protect and probe into the problems of elderly because they are also reservoir of knowledge and wisdom so that the elderly people can lead a dignified and meaningful life without being lonely and neglected.

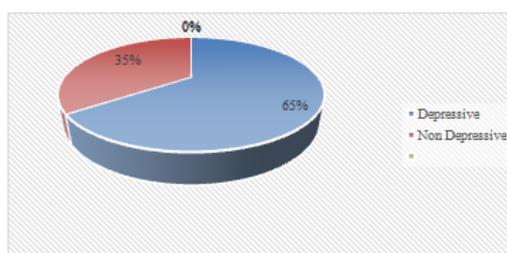


Figure 1: The Prevalence of Depressed and Non- Depressed Elderly in Kashmir

Source: Ahmad, A. Altaf, M. & Jan, K. (2016). Loneliness, Self-esteem and Depression among Elderly People in Kashmir. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. P.150

The above figure 1 reveals that majority of the elderly i.e. (65 percent) in Kashmir are living in depression. It has been observed from the data that loneliness, less happy, less satisfied, individualism, not better health, living in isolation and more pessimistic is the cause of depression among elderly in Kashmir. It has been observed by the study that the prevalence of chronic illness among the elderly people in Kashmir is high most of the elderly had chronic illnesses. The most prevalent chronic illness in this study as per the secondary source of data is hypertension, followed by diabetes and mellitus. Most of the elderly with chronic illness had only one illness, with a smaller percentage having a combination of 2 or 3 illnesses. The study reveals that the major chronic illness reported among the elderly is joint pain, followed by hypertension and respiratory problems.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the above discussion, it has been concluded that elderly people in Kashmir are facing various social, psychological and emotional problems which have tremendously impacted on their health. They are mostly facing ill health, the problems of insufficient income to support themselves and their dependents, the problem of incapability to make creative use of free time, problems of social adjustment, less social security, lack of love and recognition, social participation, less dignity and self respect, problems of intergenerational voids and conflicts, loneliness etc. The biggest challenge that aged face is the challenge of adjustment. They require psychological adjustment due to increased dependence and role loss. Apart from this, it has been also analyzed by the study that due to the conflict situation in Kashmir elderly people faces so many social as well as psychological problems like anxiety, depression, loneliness, heart attacks and emotional problems. It has been also observed by the study that due to the conflict in Kashmir children move from outside the country for the purpose of employment which has tremendously impacted on their elderly parents they

remain alone at their homes. The study depicts that most of the elderly people in Kashmir are suffering from health problems such as hypertension followed by arthritis, diabetes, asthma, cataract, anemia but the widespread problem of that of elderly was stress, anxiety, blood pressure, and hypertension. Majority of the elderly are not happy in life except those who were taken care by their nears and dears and whose children had well settled and stayed with them and they had spend their previous life happily without economic hardships

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