

## **Social life and activity pattern of elderly**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Indian society is undergoing rapid transformation. Due to improvement in health care facilities, increasing awareness and better life-style, the life-expectancy has risen and as a result the population of elderly is on an increase. Under the impact of globalization, industrialization and modernization, the family system in India is shattering. Due to migration of youth to cities nuclear families are coming up. With the changing scenario, the care of elderly has emerged as an important issue demanding an early attention.

**Key Words :** Social Life, Activity pattern, Nuclear families

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ageing is an irreversible biological phenomenon. Old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human beings, and thus the end of life cycle. It is the survival of a growing number of people completing their traditional adult roles. Chronologically, persons above 60 years of age are classified as aged persons. Being old or ageing is as much a state of mind involving how we live and our attitude towards life, as it is a physical condition. People can also be considered old because of certain change in their activity or social roles, example when they retire or when they become grand-parents.

Population ageing is taking place in nearly all the countries of the world. Ageing results from decreasing mortality and most importantly, declining fertility. This process leads to a relative reduction in the proportion of children and to an increase in the share of people in the main working ages and of the older persons in the population. The global share of older people (aged 60 years and over) has increased from 9.2% in 1990 to 11.7% in 2013 and will continue to grow as a proportion of world population reaching 21.1% by 2050 (World Population Ageing, 2013).

According to population census 2011 there are nearly 104 million elderly persons (aged 60 years and above) in India, 53 million females and 51 million males. Both the share and size of elderly population is increasing over time. From 5.6% in 1961 the population has increased to 8.6% in 2011 ([www.mospi.gov.in](http://www.mospi.gov.in)).

Old age is a golden age of peace and relaxation when people can harvest the fruits of

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their life-long labour. Indian culture is a rich one where strong family bonds persist and due care and respect is imparted to each and every family member, especially the elderly. With rapid industrialization, urbanization and technological development the joint family system is disintegrating. The traditional values are in process of erosion resulting in weakening of family ties. This has posed a great threat to the issue of care of elderly in India. The coping capacities of the younger and elder family members are now being challenged under various circumstances resulting in neglect and abuse of elderly in many ways, both within the family and outside (Shettar, 2013).

In view of the above facts, the present study was planned to study the life style and health status of retired government personnel from an urban area of Rajasthan, India.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in an urban area of Rajasthan. One hundred retired (60 plus) elderly who were cooperative and mentally receptive comprised of the study sample. The study sample constituted of an equal number of elderly males and females.

A questionnaire was designed to collect data on various aspects relating to general information, life style, activity and health status of elderly. The collected data was tabulated and analyzed to draw the required information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### General profile:

#### *Marital status:*

The study was conducted on a sample of 100 retired elderly comprising of an equal number of males and females. A large proportion of the sample (90.00%) was enjoying married life, *i.e.* their spouse was alive (Table 1). However, a significant percentage of total sample came under the category of widow/widower (10.00%), the percentage being higher in females (14.00%) as compared to the males (06.00%).

The observations are in accordance with the statistics. The WHO 2015 data on life expectancy in India ([www.worldlifeexpectancy.com](http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com)) shows a higher life expectancy at birth for females (69.90 years) than males (66.90 years). The life expectancy at 60 (in years) has been stated to be 16.9 years for men and 19 years for women ([www.mospi.gov.in](http://www.mospi.gov.in)). Another major reason for this higher incidence of widowhood could be that in India, the girls at the time of their marriage are usually younger than their male counterparts and this age difference may be as high as 10 years. The impact of this difference may be observed in the later years when after reaching old age, the husband dies and the wife is left to lead the life of widowhood.

Krishnakumar (2004) reported that while over 78% of the elderly men have the support of their spouses, 64% of the elderly women are widowed, most of them dependent on someone else for their care. A similar study (Jain *et al.*, 2015) found that maximum subjects (66.50%) were married, 31.20% were widow/widower, 1% divorced, 0.80% separated and 0.50% unmarried.

<b>Table 1 : General profile of elderly</b>						
Details	Male (N=50)		Female(N=50)		Overall	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
<b>Marital status</b>						
Married	47	94.00	43	86.00	90	90.00
Unmarried	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Widow/Widower	3	6.00	7	14.00	10	10.00
Remarried	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Separated	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Type of family</b>						
Joint	32	64.00	35	70.00	67	67.00
Nuclear	18	36.00	15	30.00	33	33.00
Extended	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Educational level</b>						
Illiterate	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Primary	1	2.00	2	4.00	3	3.00
Middle	5	10.00	2	4.00	7	7.00
Secondary	4	8.00	4	8.00	8	8.00
Senior Secondary	5	10.00	4	8.00	9	9.00
Graduate	24	48.00	31	62.00	55	55.00
Post Graduate	12	24.00	7	14.00	19	19.00
Technical	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Present work status</b>						
Employed	6	12.00	1	2.00	7	7.00
Self Employed	24	48.00	11	22.00	35	35.00
Unemployed	20	40.00	38	76.00	58	58.00

### ***Type of family:***

Recently the family value system has shattered in India. The traditional joint family system is breaking up and nuclear families are on a rise. The data of present study revealed that 33.00% elderly resided in nuclear families and the rest 67.00% lived in joint family setup. Almost similar results were reported by Jain *et al.* (2015) where 28.8% subjects belonged to nuclear families, 24.2% to joint families and 47.0% to three generation family.

### ***Educational level:***

All the subjects were retired government servants and all of them were literate. The education level of the subjects varied from primary to post-graduation with a maximum number in the category of graduates (48.00% males and 62.00% females).

### ***Present work status of elderly:***

Nearly two-fifth (58.00%) of the elderly were leading unemployed life. Rest of the elderly were either self-employed or employed. Seven percent elderly joined service elsewhere after retirement (12.00% males and 02.00% females). Nearly one-third elderly were engaged in their own business.

**Social life profile of elderly:**

Keeping active is essential to lead a satisfactory and healthy old age. Social interaction is an important indicator of well-being. All the elderly lead a socially active life (Table 2). All of them made their active participation in social and religious activities. However, only two elderly males were associated with any organization working for the benefit of elderly.

<b>Table 2 : Social life profile of elderly</b>						
Details	Male (N=50)		Female (N=50)		Overall	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
<b>Social Visits</b>						
Yes	50	100.00	50	100.00	100	100.00
No	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Participation in Social/Religious Activities</b>						
Yes	50	100.00	50	100.00	100	100.00
No	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Type of Life Led</b>						
Planned	35	70.00	20	40.00	55	55.00
Unplanned	15	30.00	30	60.00	45	45.00

More than half (55%) of the elderly led a well-planned life, the number being higher in the males (35) as compared to the females (20). The reason behind this may be that it is easier for males to perform their work in a well scheduled time. Females, being involved in house-hold chores, have to perform multiple works and therefore it is more difficult for them to follow their schedules strictly.

**Activity pattern:**

Physical activity is operationally defined as all movements of everyday life, including work, activities of daily living, recreation, exercise and sporting activities (WHO, 1996).

Walking was a common practice (Table 3). The percentage of such males was higher (58%) as compared to females (34%). A majority of them went for a slow walk while a few took brisk walk. Exercise was a less common feature with only 19% elderly engaged in daily exercise. In this case also the percentage of males was higher (24%) as compared to the females (14%).

Despite the strong evidence health benefits associated with physical activity, older adults are a population at risk of insufficient activity to achieve these health benefits (Taylor *et al.*, 2004; National Ageing Research Institute, 2003). With the technological advances and changing life style, physical activity is no longer an integral part of our life. Our dependency on internet, TV, cell phones, e-commerce, e-banking, social media is increasing at a fast pace. This has provoked and thus forced us to shift our life-style towards a sedentary one with a reduced level of physical activity.

Since the study sample comprised of retired elderly and most of them were residing in joint family setup, elderly spent their leisure hours in various activities of interest. Nearly one-fifth of the elderly spent more than four hours per in leisure activities. Nearly half of the elderly spent less than two hours a day and 29% 2-4 hours per day in entertainment and

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<b>Table 3: Activity pattern of elderly</b>						
Details	Male (N=50)		Female (N=50)		Overall	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
<b>Walking</b>						
Yes	29	58.00	17	34.00	46	46.00
No	21	42.00	33	66.00	54	54.00
<b>Type of walk*</b>						
Slow	20	68.97	16	94.12	36	78.26
Brisk	8	27.59	1	5.88	9	19.57
Jogging	1	3.45	0	0.00	1	2.17
<b>Exercise</b>						
Yes	12	24.00	7	14.00	19	19.00
No	38	76.00	43	86.00	81	81.00
<b>Leisure hour</b>						
<2 Hours	29	58.00	23	46.00	52	52.00
2-4 Hours	12	24.00	17	34.00	29	29.00
>4 Hours	9	18.00	10	20.00	19	19.00
<b>Other's help taken</b>						
Yes	10	20.00	8	16.00	18	18.00
No	17	34.00	16	32.00	33	33.00
Occasionally	23	46.00	26	52.00	49	49.00

\*Percentage calculated from persons going for a walk

other activities relating to their hobbies.

Most of the elderly led a fully active life. A less than one-fifth elderly depended on other family members and took their help in fulfilling their daily chores.

**Conclusion:**

The present study was conducted on life style and activity pattern of retired elderly. Results of the study revealed that the elderly led a socially active and planned life. All the respondents participated actively in various social and religious activities. Very few elderly depended on others for their needs and dependence was also partial. Exercise and walk were a part of daily routine of many subjects. The elderly enjoyed this phase of their life and spent a part of their in leisure activities too.

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