



## Physical Needs and Adjustments Made by the Elderly

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**KEYWORDS** Elderly. Problems. Adjustments. Old Age

**ABSTRACT** Old age is generally a closing period in one's life span. Old age bring about a wide variety of problems. During the old age physical and psychological function declines. There is a decline in intellectual activity, social activity and physical health. The needs and problems of the elderly vary significantly according to their age, socio-economic status, health, living status and other such background characteristics. The present study is an attempt to study the physical needs and adjustments made by the elderly. The sample comprised of 100 elderly people (50 men and 50 women) of Jammu city in the age group of 65 years and above. Purposive Sampling Technique was employed for sample selection. Interview Schedule was framed to collect the required information and Observation method was used to cross check the information given by the respondents. Results of the study revealed that majority of elderly men and women lived in joint families. Majority of the respondents were satisfied regarding their financial position. They had enough money to look after their needs. Majority of both elderly men and women liked to watch T.V in leisure time. Men liked to read newspapers and women preferred reading religious books. . Majority of the respondent were facing the health problems like joint pains, failing vision, high blood pressure and diabetes. The finding revealed that the elderly were looked after by their spouses when they fell ill. It was observed that though most of the elderly were living in joint families still the spouses looked after each other when they fell ill this may be due to the growing generation gap.

### INTRODUCTION

Old age is the closing period in the life span. It is a period when people "move away" from previous, more desirable periods or times of "usefulness". As people move away from the earlier periods of their lives, they often look back on them, usually regretfully, and tend to live in the present, ignoring the future as much as possible. Age sixty is usually considered the dividing line between middle and old age. However, it is recognized that chronological age is a poor criterion to use in marking off the beginning of old age because there are such marked differences among individuals in the age at which aging actually begins. Because of better living conditions and better health care, most men and women today do not show the mental and physical signs of aging until the mid-sixties or even the early seventies. (Elizabeth 2004). In most developed countries, there are about 65 men for every 100 women in the age group of 65 and above. Generally in developing countries, especially in India, there are more old men than old women. The sex ratio will probably fall in many developing countries with female life expectancy projected to increase faster than male life expectancy. In most developing countries, more than 50% of women aged 65 years and older are widowed and in some countries more than 75%

of the women aged 75 and older are widowed. In contrast, there is no country in which more than 40% of the men aged 75 and older are single.

The stark reality of the ageing scenario in India is that there are 77 million older persons in India today, and the number is growing to grow to 177 million in another 25 years with life expectancy having increased from 40 years in 1951 to 64 years when a person today has 20 years more to live than he would have 50 years back.

### Problems of Elderly

Given the trend of population aging in the country, the older population faces a number of problems and adjusts to them in varying degrees. These problems range from absence of ensured and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependents to ill-health, absence to social security, loss of social role and recognition and to the non-availability of opportunities for creative use of free times. The needs and problems of the elderly vary significantly according to their age, socio-economic status, health, living status and other such background characteristics.

### Some Common Problems Unique to Old Age

Physical helplessness, which necessitates dependency on others. Economic insecurity

severe enough to necessitate a complete change in pattern of living.

Establishing living conditions in accordance with changes in economic or physical conditions.

Making new friends to replace those who have died or moved away or who are invalid.

### Adjustment in Old Age

Adjustment is “ a process involving both mental and behavioral responses by which an individual strives to cope with inner needs, tensions, frustrations and conflicts and to bring harmony between these inner demands and those imposed upon him by the world in which he lives,” if the conflicts are solved to satisfy the individual needs with in the tenets approved by the society the individual is considered adjusted.

Adjustments in old age are difficult because of the limited capacity of the old, their diminishing energy and declining mental abilities. The degree of success depends upon the individual's adaptability. The world will not adopt itself to the elderly, only the elderly will have to adopt themselves to the world.

The traditional norms and values of Jammu and Kashmir Society laid stress on showing respect and providing care for the elderly but due to urbanization and growing generation gap, the elders are being ignored and facing many problems and finding it difficult to adjust.

Keeping this in view the present study was taken up with an objective; to study the physical needs and adjustments made by the elderly.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample for the present study comprised

of 100 elderly people (50 men and 50 women) of Jammu city in the age group of 65 years and above. Purposive Sampling Technique was employed for sample selection. Interview Schedule was framed to collect the required information and Observation method was used to cross check the information given by the respondents. The interview schedule was pre-tested on (10%) of the sample and modified accordingly. This sample was not included in the final study.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### General Information of the respondents

Figure 1 reveals that majority, (94%) of women and (84%) of men were in the age group of 65-70 years, whereas (16%) of men and (6%) of women were in the age group of 70-75 years.

Table 1 shows that (38%) of elderly women were in teaching profession before retirement , (18%) served as librarians, (14%) as accounts officers ,(16%) as peons, (4%) as postal clerk and 8% as nurse ,(2%) as head master where as (22%) of elderly men were in teaching profession before retirement (20%) served in the army (16%) as account officers, 8% as peons,(10%) has served in police , (10%) as agricultural assistant, (4%) as head master and (2%) served as post-master as a previous occupation.

Majority (96%) of women and (82%) men are presently not occupied where as (8%) of elderly men and (4%) of elderly women choose business as their present occupation. (6%) of elderly men are working as Accountant and (4%) of the elderly men are working as salesmen.

Figure 2 shows that majority (72%) of the elderly women and (66%) men belonged to joint

**Table 1: Occupation**

Occupation	Previous				Occupation	Present			
	Elderly men		Elderly women			Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
Teachers	11	22%	19	38%	Accountant	3	6%	-	-
Head Master	2	4%	1	2%	Sale men	2	4%	-	-
Librarian			9	18%	Business	4	8%	2	4%
Peon	4	8%	8	16%	N.A	41	82%	48	96%
Post Master	1	2%							
Postal Cleark	4	8%	2	4%					
Account officer	8	16%	7	14%					
Agricukar Asst.	5	10%							
Police men	5	10%							
Army	10	20%							
Staff nurse			4	8%					

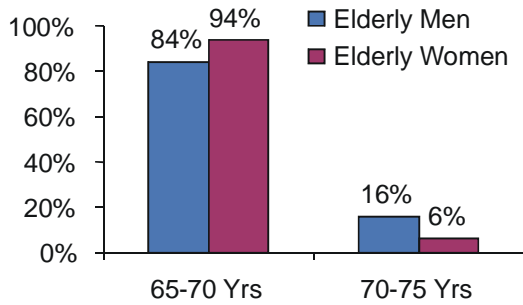


Fig. 1. Age of the Respondents

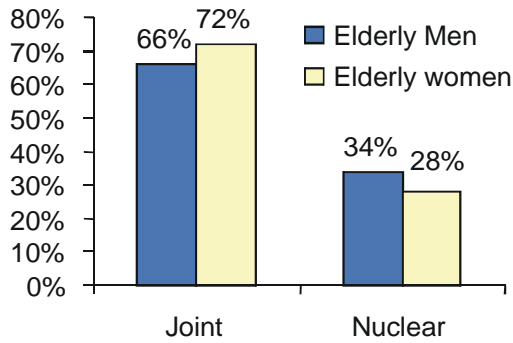


Fig. 2. Type of Family

family, where as (34%) men and (28%) women belonged to nuclear families.

Table 2 shows that the number of members present in a family ranged from 1-8 in (42%) of the family of elderly men the number of family members were 7-8 and in (44%) of elderly women families the number of family members present ranged from 4-6.

Table 3 shows that the monthly income varied between Rs 2,000-10,000. For 34% of elderly men

Table 2: Number of family members

Members	Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%
1-3	13	26%	19	38%
4-6	16	32%	22	44%
7-8	21	42%	9	18%

Table 3: Monthly income of the respondents

Income	Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Rs. 2000-4000	6	12%	8	16%
Rs. 4000-6000	17	34%	15	30%
Rs. 6000-8000	16	32%	19	38%
Rs. 8000-10000	11	22%	8	16%

the income ranged between Rs 4,000- 6,000, where as for 38% of elderly women income ranged from Rs 6,000-8,000.

**Problem and Adjustment of the Elderly**

*Physical Aspect*

Table 4 shows that majority (98%) elderly men and (62%) women went for morning walk, (40%) of elderly men and 22% of elderly women went for morning walk between 5:00 – 6:00am, (32%) of elderly men (28%) of elderly women did not go for walk but took a stroll in their garden. (28%) of elderly men and (12%) of elderly women went for morning walk between 6:00-7:00 am

Majority (98%) of elderly men and (86%) of elderly women read newspaper in the morning (44%) of elderly women and (18%) of men read newspaper between 10:00-11:00am in the morning. (30%) of men and (22%) of elderly women read newspaper between 7:00-8:00am (22%) of the men and (16%) of the women read newspaper between 11:00-12:00,(16%) of men and (4%) of women read newspaper between 6:00-7:00am and (12%) of men usually read newspaper between 8:00-9:00 am in the morning.

All the women and (84%) of men usually performed *Pooja/Archana*. (54%) of the men and (40%) of elderly women performed *Pooja/Archana* between 6:00-7:00am.(42%) of elderly women and (28%) of elderly men used to attend *Pooja/Archana* between 7:00-8:00am. (18%) of elderly women performed *Pooja/Archana* between 5:00-6:00am in the morning where as (2%) of men performed *Pooja/Archana* between 8:00-9:00am. (82%) of men and (36%) women did marketing for essential Commodities while returning back after morning walk and all the respondents took breakfast and rest as per their routine (54%) of elderly women and (15%) men respondents prepared breakfast in the morning.

Table 5 shows that (56%) of elderly men and (38%) of elderly women took rest in between 2:00-3:00pm and (44%) of elderly women and (54%) of men took rest between 3:00-4:00pm. (54%) of elderly women and (38%) of elderly men usually take lunch at 12:00-1:00pm, where as (20%) of elderly women and (4%) of elderly men take lunch in between 2:00-3:00pm. (76%) of women and (66%) of men were interested in reading books and majority of both men and women liked to watch TV.



of men prepared dinner in between 8:00-9:00pm and (32%) of women usually prepared dinner in between 9:00-10:00pm where as (64%) of the elderly women and (40%) of the elderly men usually spent time with their grand children in between 9:00-10:00pm and 10:00-11:00pm in the night.

Table 8 depicts that for majority of men (86%), the house hold chores were performed by their wives, for (58%) of elderly men house hold chores were shared by their daughter-in-laws, sons (26%), maids (26%) and daughters (20%). In case of women majority (88%) of the elderly women, the house hold chores were managed by their daughters in laws, it was also shared by the maids (32%), husbands (18%) and daughters (14%).

Table 9 reveals that majority of both elderly men and women liked to watch T.V in their leisure time. Whereas majority of women (86%) and men (56%) kept themselves busy by interacting with their grandchildren. Majority of elderly women (76%) and elderly men (66%) spend time reading books and newspaper. Men liked to read news papers and women preferred religious books and newspapers. The respondents generally took up hobbies like gardening, reading, watching T.V, and interacting with grand children because due to

**Table 8: House hold chores performed by other family members**

Response	Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Daughter in Law	29	58%	44	88%
Daughter	10	20%	7	14%
Son	13	26%	6	12%
Maid	13	26%	16	32%
Servant	2	4%	1	2%
Wife	43	86%	-	-
Husband	-	-	9	18%

**Table 9: Leisure time activities**

Leisure Activities	Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Watching T.V	50	100%	46	92%
Gardening or rising plants	31	62%	34	68%
Reading	33	66%	38	76%
Going for walk	34	68%	31	62%
Interacting with the grand children	28	56%	43	86%
Joining club	13	26%	11	22%
Social work	25	50%	2	4%
Joining a new job	9	18%	2	4%

\* Multiple Responses

physical limitation they could not move out of the house very often. The other activities performed by the respondent during their leisure time were taking a stroll in the park, visiting club, taking part in social work. Some of the respondents engaged themselves by interacting with their friends, playing cards etc.

A similar study by Atchley (1977) found that the aged made effective use of leisure time though they had a freedom of choice, they were limited by physical, financial and transport action factors. Television, visiting, gardening, reading were found the most relevant leisure activities.

Table 10 reveals that majority of elderly men (70%) and women (76%) were suffering from memory laps. (68%) women (48%) men complaint about joint pains. (50%) of women and (46%) men had the problem of failing vision. (48%) men and (32%) women complained of high blood pressure, (46%) men and (30%) women were diabetic, (46%) women and (30%) men had back-ache, (42%) women and (28%) men complained about chronic fatigue, where as (34%) women (32%) men were facing sleep disorder and rest experienced loss of appetite.

**Table 10: Health problems faced by the respondent**

Health problems	Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Joint pains	24	48%	34	68%
Back ache	15	30%	23	46%
Chronic fatigue	14	28%	21	42%
Failing vision	23	46%	25	50%
Sleeplessness	16	32%	17	34%
Loss of appetite	4	8%	11	22%
Memory laps	35	70%	38	76%
B.P/ diabetes	23	46%	15	30%

• Multiple Responses

Raovenkaba (1981) conducted a similar study on mental health of aged and found that many of the elderly suffer from higher mental function disturbances and memory problems.

Table 11 shows that majority of both men (96%) and women (94%) were looked after by their spouses when they fell ill. The children of the elderly men (42%) and elderly women (26%) also cared and looked after their parents.

Table 12 shows that majority of men (90%) and women (78%) took normal diet, whereas (10%) men and (22%) women preferred to take soft diet because of gastric problems. Similar study conducted by Srivastara (1996) studied the

**Table 11: Care of respondent during sickness**

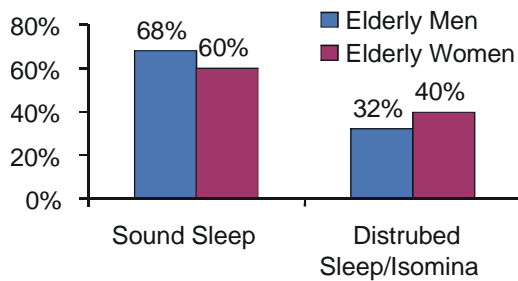
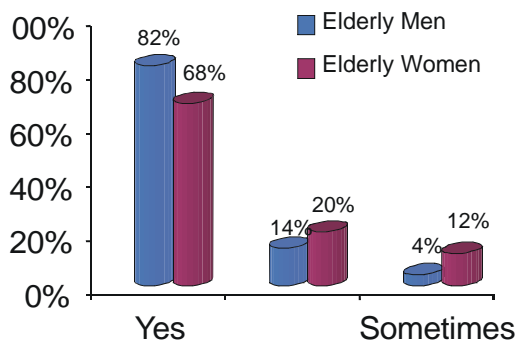
Response	Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Your children	21	42%	13	26%
Your spouse	48	96%	47	94%
Your grand children	4	8%	8	16%
Servant	-	-	7	14%

**Table 12: Type of diet taken**

Type of diet	Elderly men		Elderly women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Normal	45	90%	39	78%
Soft	5	10%	11	22%

practices regarding nutrition among the elderly, observed that fruits, leafy green vegetables and milk were rarely consumed in adequate amounts.

Figure 3 shows that majority of elderly men (68%) and elderly women (60%) had sound sleep at night. Where as (40%) women and (32%) men, complained of disordered sleep and felt less refreshed during the day and were taking medication for sound sleep.

**Fig 3. Sleep Disorder****Fig. 4. Regular Exercise**

A similar study conducted by Pallesen (1998) show that (19.1%) of both elderly men and women were unsatisfied with their sleep,(11.3%) were neither unsatisfied nor satisfied with their sleep and (69.6%) were satisfied with their sleep.

Figure 4 reveals that majority of elderly men (82%) and elderly women (68%) took regular exercise like light walks and yoga. They felt relaxed and refreshed after the exercise. Where as (20%) elderly women and (14%) men could not take regular exercise due to various health problems (12%) elderly women (4%) elderly men took exercise occasionally.

## CONCLUSION

The condition of the aged has recently surfaced as one of the foremost social problems in India. India, like many other developing countries in the world, is presently witnessing the rapid growth of its population. urbanisation, moder-nisation and globalisation has led to a change in economic structure, the erosion of social values, and the weakening of social institution such as the joint family. In this changing economic and social milieu, the younger generation is searching for new identities and the traditional sense of duty and obligation of the younger generation towards the older generation is being eroded. The older generation is caught between the decline in traditional values on one hand and the absence of an adequate social security system on the other and finding it difficult to adjust in the family. Keeping this in view the present study was taken up to identify and highlight the problem faced by the elderly and adjustment to these problems.

The present study was conducted on 100 elderly people of Jammu city. 50 men and 50 women were purposive selected. An Interview schedule was framed to collect the required information. Observation method was used to cross check the information given by the respondents. Findings of the study revealed that majority of elderly men and women lived in joint families. Majority of the respondent were satisfied regarding their financial position. They had enough money to look after their needs. Majority of elderly men liked to read newspapers and women preferred reading religious book and newspapers. Majority of the respondents were facing the health problems like joint pains, failing vision, high blood pressure and diabetes. The finding reveals that the elderly where looked

after by their spouses when they fell ill. Majority of men and women took normal diet, whereas (10%) men and (22%) women preferred to take soft diet because of gastric problems. Majority of elderly men and women took regular exercise like light walks and yoga. They felt relaxed and refreshed after the exercise. Where as few elderly women and men could not take regular exercise due to various health problems. Majority of the respondents had a positive attitude towards old age and they perceived old age as respectful life. Few had perceived old age as a relaxing period of life. Whereas Most of elderly women and men viewed old age as a period of decreased physical, mental capacities. Whereas rest of the respondents had negative views regarding old age they perceived old age as a period of dependency, loneliness and economic insecurity.

#### SUGGESTIONS

In view of the findings following suggestions are made for the elderly people to make their life easy and happy Health education programs under government and voluntary –agency sponsorship

with emphasis on promoting positive attitude towards the elderly should be initiated.

Cadres of health professional and paraprofessional workers committed to working with the elderly should be developed.

Non-governmental organization should state community programs oriented toward inclusion of older people.

Elderly should be educated on the importance of their own good nutrition and behavioral factors.

Elderly should engage in physical activity, outdoors if possible, during the day ( at least four hours before bed time)

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