

**Empirical Study**

## **An Empirical Study to Measure the Quality of Life and Happiness among Elders Residing in Family and Old Age Home**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this investigation an attempt was taken to explore the relationship between the level of quality of life and happiness among elders residing in old age home and in the family. The study was carried on by formulating three hypotheses that (a)- Elders residing in old age home and in the family would differ significantly in terms of their quality of life. (b)- Elders residing in old age home and in the family would differ significantly in terms of their happiness. (c)-Quality of life and Happiness would be positively correlated. The study was conducted on 100 old aged people of Patna (50 old aged people, residing in Sahara Old Age Home, Rukanpura, Patna and 50 old aged people living with families), by employing incidental sampling technique. Their age ranged from 65 to 70 years. The WHOQOL-BREF was applied to measure quality of life among elders residing in old age home and in the family while Oxford happiness scale developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills (Oxford University) was used to assess the level of happiness among residing in old age home and in the family. A Personal Data Sheet was also used to gather necessary information from the respondents. The obtained scores were statistically analysed and verified by computing t-ratio and co-efficient of correlation. The result proved all the hypotheses. It was concluded that there is significant difference between quality of life and happiness among elders residing in old age home and in the family. It was also found by the researcher that happiness and quality of life were positively correlated.

**Keywords:** *Quality of Life, Happiness, Old-Age, Old Age Home, Family*

**A**geing - a natural phenomenon has multifaceted process. It is not only described as biogenic and therapeutic concern alone but of psycho-social, economical, and socio-demographical significance. Oldness is the final phase of life-cycle. This is the time when people "move away" from earlier, more alluring phase or time of "usefulness". In the empty nest stage of the life span, the person's social commitment, advantages and expectations undergo a transition. In simple words, it can be said that old age is a shift in an individual's position from active social participation to remarkable deterioration in role representation and from economic independence to economic dependence.

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The longevity of the people along with modification in the family composition and transformation in the relationships of newer and older generations has brought into light concerns related to the elders in our country. The mushrooming of old age homes in our country draws the attention to the requirements of elders, which were un-acclaimed before. The institutions for the aged have blossomed up to fulfil their requirements from various dimensions. The desires of the elderly to spend their final phase of life in holy places, the relocation of children for employment opportunities, their dysfunctional or unstable adjustment in family and financial dependency of the elders are the major factors for the Indian elders to move to old age homes. Weakening of family relationships, emergence of nuclear family and rapid growth in women employment etc. are other responsible causes for speedy flourishing this culture. As a result, family concern and care of the elderly is becoming constantly strenuous and especially elders seem to strive for old age home like institution as a substitute in their closing era of life.

These days old age homes are set up to provide care and support to the elders. Old age homes are particularly relevant in the context of aging and sustaining longevity in the older generation of the society.

The concept of “institutionalization” of the elderly has mainly been adopted from the foreign countries. Nowadays, the old age homes are essential as they are required to look after the abandoned, alone and disheartened elders in the sunset of their lives.

There is abundant study on the issue of the institutionalized old people overseas but in Indian context, very few systematic data are accessible on this question but as the concept of institutionalization is comparatively newer in India, the adaptation method of the elders residing in old age home, their feelings of gratification, happiness, disappointment and hope from family & relatives provide a thought-provoking field of investigation.

The WHO (World Health Organization) has defined the Quality of Life as “an individual’s perception of his/her position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which he/she lives, and in relation to his/her goals expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad-ranging concept, incorporating in a comparing way the person’s physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and their relationship to salient features of their environment”.

Quality of life portrays the personal realization of an individual’s psycho-physical well-being, along with socio-cultural, environmental, and over-all life situation. Quality of life is described as a person’s self-reported level of happiness and life satisfaction. It is over and above grading the healthy physique; psycho-sociological wellness is too identified as more essential components for the happiness and life-satisfaction of elders.

To know the quality of life of elders, very limited number of studies has been done by applying different tools. Though, there are very few researches for measuring the quality of life of elders residing in old age home/family/any other set up. In this context, this research was conducted to measure the Quality of Life among elders residing in an institution and in the family set-up of Patna district.

Happiness is an emotional condition of welfare depicted by good feelings extending from satisfaction to extreme pleasure. Many multidimensional approaches have attempted to

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describe pleasure and to identify its origins. Though happiness has many definitions, it is usually explained as involving positive emotions and contentment of life.

Happiness is a feeling of well-being, pleasure, or satisfaction. When people are successful, safe, satisfied, relieved, excited or lucky, they feel happiness. Happiness is generally known as the reverse of sadness. Feeling happy may help people to be relaxed, relieved and to smile.

Many branches of the research along with Positive Psychology, are employing the objective techniques to know about "happiness" and its attainment.

### **Dimensions of Happiness**

1. Pleasure and gratification,
2. Embodiment of strengths and virtues and
3. Meaning and purpose.

Every dimension of happiness is connected to positive emotional feeling. These are succession from the first to last types of happiness. Pleasure/gratification is succeeded to strengths/virtues and finally meaning/purpose. (Seligman 2002, p.61).

Hence, this investigation was conducted to measure the quality of life and happiness among the elders residing with families and in old age homes.

*The main aims of this investigation are:*

- To examine the degree of happiness among elders residing with families and in old age home.
- To assess the level of quality of life among elders residing with families and in old age home.
- To investigate the significant difference between elders residing with families and in old age home in terms of their quality of life and happiness.
- To measure the correlation between quality of life and happiness among elders residing with families and in old age home.

### ***Hypotheses***

Keeping the objective in view following hypotheses were formulated for verification:

Elders residing in old age home and in the family would differ significantly in terms of their quality of life. The inclusion of this hypothesis in the present research was to see that whether quality of life is affected by the status of institutionalization or not.

Elders residing in old age home and in the family would differ significantly in terms of their happiness. Through the literature review it was found that quality of life was related to the happiness level among elders residing in old age home and in the family. Hence, the focus of this study was to examine the difference between residents of old age home and in the family set-up in terms of their level of happiness.

Quality of life and Happiness would be positively correlated. Through the literature review it was found that higher level of happiness was correlated with the quality of life among elders residing in old age home and in the family. Hence, the main aim was to see that whether

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quality of life among residents of old age home and in the family set-up is influenced by happiness level or not.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Sample*

The present investigation was carried on the 100 old aged people (50 living with families & 50 living in old age home) by employing incidental sampling technique. The institutionalized old aged people were taken from Sahara Old Age Home, Rukanpura, Patna while non-institutionalized old aged people were taken from different families of Patna. Their age ranged from 65-70 years. They were also matched in other respects as far as possible.

#### *Tools*

- **A Personal Data Sheet** constructed by the researcher was used for gathering necessary personal information from the subjects.
- **WHOQOL: BREF Scale** developed by June 1997, U.S. Version, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington United States of America was applied to measure quality of life among elders residing in old age home and in the family.
- **Oxford Happiness Scale** by *Michael Argyle* and *Peter Hills* (Oxford University) was employed for measuring level of happiness among elders residing in old age home and in the family

#### *Procedure*

The test was administered in two different sessions. First of all personal data sheet was administered to the respondents and relevant information were gathered. Thereafter, Oxford happiness scale and quality of life scale WHOQOL-BREF were administered to the respondents one by one with a short interval and the responses made by the subjects were scored, tabulated and analyzed by applying t-test and correlation-coefficient test.

The findings based on these statistical techniques have been shown in table 1-3.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For deriving useful conclusion, the data is organized in a systematic way. The obtained result is explained on the basis of statistical analysis.

*Table-1 Difference between the Mean scores of Elders residing in Old Age Home and in Family in terms of their Quality of Life*

GROUP	MEAN	SD	SE	SEd	t-ratio	df	P-value
Elders residing in Old Age Home	65.6	7.95	1.12	1.2	32.75	98	P< .001
Elders residing in Family	104.9	3.12	.44				

Table-1 presents that the difference between the mean scores of elders living in old age home (65.6) and elders living in family (104.9) in terms of their quality of life is significant at .001 level of confidence. Thus, it can be concluded that elders living in old age home and in family differ significantly in respect of their quality of life.

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It is evident from table-1 that the obtained mean score of Elders living in Old Age Home (65.6) is lesser than the obtained mean score of Elders living in Family (104.9) in terms of their quality of life. The obtained value of SD of Elders living in Old Age Home and Elders living in Family on Quality of Life is 7.95 & 3.12 respectively which clearly shows that in case of both Institutionalized and Non-Institutionalized old aged people on quality of life there is less internal variation because their obtained value of SD (7.95) and (3.12) is quite less to its obtained mean value (65.6) and (104.9) respectively.

The obtained t-value = 32.75 is highly significant, therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis framed by the researchers that “Elders living in old age home and in family would differ significantly in terms of their quality of life is accepted. Hence, it is clear that the quality of life is better in those elders who reside in the family in comparison to those elders who live in the old age home. This may be due to the fact that, in the family set-up, elderly people enjoy better social relationship as they stay closer to their family members as well as with the neighbourhood.

**Table-2** *Difference between the Mean scores of Elders residing in Old Age Home and in Family in terms of their Happiness*

GROUP	MEAN	SD	SE	SEd	t-ratio	df	P-value
Elders residing in Old Age Home	102.4	3.84	.54	.8	3.8	98	< .01
Elders residing in Family	105.44	4.2	.59				

Table - 2 shows that the obtained mean score (102.4) of elders living in old age home is lesser than the obtained mean score (105.44) of elders living in family on Happiness. Though the obtained difference in mean score of elders living in old age home and in family (102.4 & 105.44 respectively) is very meagre but the obtained t-value 3.8 is highly significant at .01 level of confidence.

The obtained SD Value among elders living in old age home and in family in terms of happiness 3.84 & 4.2 show less internal variation as it is quite less to its obtained mean value 102.4 & 105.44 respectively.

So it can be said that elders residing in old age home have quite lesser happiness as compared to those who residing in family. In other words, elders who live with family have greater happiness.

In order to test and verify the hypothesis framed by the researcher that Quality of life and Happiness would be positively correlated, coefficient of correlation was applied. Table -3 presents the summary of the coefficient of correlation.

**Table – 3** *Coefficient of Correlation Between Quality of Life and Happiness Among Elders residing in Old Age Home and in Family*

	N	Correlation (r)	df	P-value
Quality of life	100	.336	98	P< .01
Happiness				

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Table-3 reveals that the obtained value of coefficient of correlation ( $r$ ) = 0.336 is positive and highly significant at 0.01 level of confidence on  $df=98$ . This supports the hypothesis which suggests that there is a positive correlation between quality of life and happiness among elders residing in old age home and in family set up. It is also proved that if the level of happiness increases, life will be more satisfied. In another words, it can be said that high level of happiness improves quality of life. Hence, the hypothesis formulated by the researcher is accepted.

A study of all the above tables presents an extensive picture of the relationship between quality of life and happiness among elders residing in old age home and in family set up. The findings on the whole indicated that there is significant difference between elders residing in old age home and in family set up in terms of quality of life and happiness. Happiness is positively correlated with quality of life among elders residing in old age home and in family set up. The findings of the present research reveal that happiness plays an important role in determining the level of quality of life among elders residing in old age home and in family set up.

These outcomes are confirmed by reviews by Humboldt, Leal, Santos & Niculescu (2013), that underline that better well-being is accompanied by optimal functioning of multiple physiological systems (Singer & Ryff, 2001). Distressed familial relation and poor care by family members abrupt the poor wellness of aged. (Litwin and Shiovitz 2006). In fact, a study conducted by Chou and Chi (2001) revealed that elders who live alone feel greater dissatisfaction, depression and a higher level of financial strain in their life.

### ***Recommendation***

Elderliness had never been an issue for our country because it promotes values and ethics in every sphere of life. It is the country where a joint family system prevails. Indian customs and traditions are automatically regardful and caring elders. Ageing which is a natural fact has throughout involved the consideration of the cultured society. Arrangement for the elders in the community has become one of the fundamental questions of our modern society. The troubles or complications of the elders differ from culture to culture. However, the breakdown of the joint family system and the result of financial modification have brought into pinpoint the issues which the elders now suffering in our society. The responsibility and commitment of the new generation towards the older generation is being deteriorated. The older generation is seized between the impoverishment in cultural and traditional values on one hand and the dearth of an appropriate cultural protection approach on the other hand thus, finding it strenuous to accommodate in the home.

Finally, it can be said that the the elders residing in the families had much better emotional feelings than that of the elders of the old age home. In the family setting, healthy socialization and interactions were maintained by the family members. They had constant interactions with each other, expressions of emotions, support and protection from the family. The prevailing situation of the residents of old age home was that they experienced misery, hopelessness, dismissal and very meagre satisfaction with life. In this background, the requirement to save and secure our culture of a joint family system and the interactions, communications and empathy between the two (younger & older) generations could be more healthier. The circumstances also demand for collaborative strives of the government/non-governmental body, religious associations and individuals to understand, to solve or diminish the problems at least so that the elders can maintain a satisfied and respectful existence.

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The findings of the present research thus have brought many new facts in respect to the relation between quality of life and happiness among elders residing in old age home and family. The findings of the present research have indicated that quality of life of Institutionalized old aged people is very much affected by the presence of stress. Quality of life can be enhanced by reducing stress among them.

Counselling, health checkups, connecting generational gaps, social and familial hold are very necessary, particularly for those elders who reside in any kind of institutional set up.

The findings can be of much helpful to the counsellors, clinicians and psychologists. The findings would also help the researchers and youngsters. Longitudinal studies on a larger group of Institutionalized and Non-Institutionalized old aged people are needed in future. The findings would stimulate other researchers also to take up such problems for further investigation.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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