

Comparative Study

Anxiety in Old Age: A Comparative Study of Ashram & Family Life

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ABSTRACT

Present study lights on anxiety in old age. It is a comparative study of ashram and family life of aged persons. For this study three independent variables—Age, Residence and sex and one dependent variable-anxiety have been taken. Two tools Eight state Questionnaire Hindi version by Dr. Bhargwa and P.G.I. Health questionnaire N-1 by S.K. Verma, Wig and Persad have been used to investigate the study. Data of 320 males and females have been collected from Haridwar. Two ashrams Vanprastha and Parmarth have been selected for the study 222 trivariate factorial design has been used to calculate the data. The results indicate that the aged persons who are living in families are found more anxious than the persons who are living in families.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Old Age, Family Life, Ashram Life*

Aging is a universal process. It begins with our first breath and continues until we die. Growing old is a dynamic process, involving complex, bodily changes, redefinition of social identities, and adjustments in psychological functioning. By itself, chronological age has little meaning, although it does serve as a convenient indication not only of psychological changes but of social status as well. Aging of the individual is regarded as a process of series of changing in personality over a major portion of the life span.

Birren (1959) “Aging refers to the regular changes that occur in mature genetically representative organisms living under representative environmental conditions as they advance in chronological age.”

Age 60 is usually considered the dividing line between middle and old age. Because of the better living conditions and better health care, most of the men and women today do not show the mental and physical signs of aging until the mid sixties or early seventies.

A ‘grey’ revolution is rocking the universe. The population of elderly people in the age group of 60 and above is almost a global phenomenon as a consequence of advanced medical sciences, modernization, development and improvement in the health standard.

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According to the United Nations projection (2022) till the year 2050 the proportion of elderly population will register a significant growth. This means That the percentage of the global population aged 65 and above is expected to rise from 10% in 2022 to 16% in 2050. The international day of the elderly is celebrated on the 1st October every year by the United Nations organization.

In old age, decline comes partly from physical and partly from psychological factors. The physical causes of decline are changes in the body cells due not to a specific disease but to the aging process. Decline may also have psychological causes, unfavorable attitudes toward oneself. Individuals who have no sustaining interests after retirement are likely to become anxious and disorganized. As a result, they go downhill both physically and mentally.

The most recent developments in scientific psychology have been concerned with the psychology of emotions. The emotional life was considered better than the rational life because it was directly connected with the body. Some old people may regress, to infancy to escape reality, becoming dependent on others for care. Thus, emotional disturbances such as anxiety may be seen commonly in maximum cases.

Anxiety

Anxiety is both a concept and personality trait. It is a pervasive and significant motivational dimension in personality and has been found to be a factor of considerable importance in influencing and directing human behavior and performance. Anxiety is unique among personality variables in its constructive and destructive potential. The concept of anxiety has played a key role in human behavior and adjustment. It has been described as a signal that warns the individual of impending or anticipated illness; it represents a danger threat from within the personality rather than an external danger. In later life anxiety is generally due to imaginary, often irrational causes rather than real ones. Feelings of inadequacy may come from any one of a number of common causes. Which results in the person's inability to handle his problems successfully without help; criticism and belittling attitudes of significant people toward the person's achievements which make him question his abilities; unrealistically high level of aspiration, which causes the person to suffer repeated failure and undermine high self-confidence?

A person with a well-developed feeling of insecurity faces even the normal uncertainties of life and the problems associated with adjusting to new situations with little confidence that he can handle them successfully. As a result, he often fails thus adding to his lack of self-confidence and increasing his anxiety.

Variables and hypothesis:

For the present study we have three independent variables and one dependent variable.

The independent variables are -

1. Residential status (Family and ashram).
2. Age (60 to 65 and 70 and above).
3. Sex (male and female)

And the dependent variable is Anxiety

Sample and Tools:

For the present study we comprised 320 aged males and females between the age group 60 to 65 and 70 and above living in families and ashrams. The sample has been collected from

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Haridwar and its nearby places. Two ashrams (Vanprasthe and Parmarth) were selected. The Eight state Questionnaire, Indian adaptation, Hindi version Kapoor and Bhargava (1990) have been used as a tool and the data is calculated by 'F' test.

The ANOVA Summary (a 05).

Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	F	P
treatment	2763.41	7	394.77	72.06	< .01
Residential status	1872.12	1	1872.12	15. 24.	<.01
age	396.04	1	396.04	0.04	
sex	1.24	1	1.24	8.38	< .01
resi x sex	217.8	1	217.8	4.34	<.01
age x sex	112.81	1	112.81	0.08	
resi x age	2.27	1	2.27	6.20	<.05
age x resi sex	161.13	1	161.13		
error	8105.28	312	25. 98		
total	10868.69	319			

Research paradigm

Residence	Male	Female	Male	Female	Σ
Family	523	643	727	729	2622
Ashram	463	428	532	425	1848
Σ	986	1071	1259	1154	4470

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result reveals that the aged persons who are passing life with families feel much anxiety in comparison to those who are living in ashrams. In families even handing over their duties and responsibilities formally or informally to their children, the aged people do not detach themselves from them. They don't feel that their children are capable of performing the responsibilities and feel always tense to think about the family matters. This attitude creates obstacles for old persons to live physically and mentally free or relax. Besides this their decreasing health creates a great problem for them. Their children don't have time to look after them. In the present time their grandchildren also don't like to play with them because they have so many means of amusement, so the older people feel ignored. The problem becomes worse when someone has lost his/her life partner. After retirement they have a lot of leisure time but they found none in the family to share their problems and pains. Their children perform their duty only to provide them food, cloth and medicine etc. Old persons don't find mentally support in their families. They live a dependent life and become unable to do their work freely. Financial dependencies make their situation more critical. All these situations create a critical greater amount of anxiety in them.

Whereas in ashrams old people live an anxiety free life. They do all their routine work themselves. They live their independent life. They don't feel alone because there are so many like minded persons to share their views and problems. The aged persons also survive in ashram according to their talent and capacities. In ashrams they participate in cultural and religious activities. As the old persons reported that they become quite satisfied in ashrams and don't feel isolation or desolation.

The present study also shows that the age group of 70 and above are found to be more emotionally disturbed (anxious) than the aged persons of 60 to 65 years. It may be due to the

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loss of physical and mental potential. As the age increases the loss of energy starts. the person starts to feel himself weaken suddenly. Gaitz and Scott (1972) found a linear increase in somatic anxiety with increasing age, almost four times greater in the oldest compared to the young age group. In another survey Gurin, Verhoff and Feld (1963) revealed that a strong trend toward symptoms of both cognitive and somatic anxiety increases across age groups. In this advanced stage he starts to tremble. He becomes not able to do his daily routine work so the oldest-old feel more anxious than the persons of who are in earlier old age.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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