

A Study of Psychological Well-Being of Senior Citizens from Community and Non Community Living

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ABSTRACT

Rise in the share of elderly in total population of India poses multiple challenges viz., improving their wellbeing through providing family support, medical assistance and social support, reducing their negative aspect of life. There is an increasing interest worldwide in the study of well-being as a means to assess and need to evaluate positive dimensions of health aspects of senior citizens. In a study on the psychological well being of senior citizens residing in community and non community living, the objective was to see the difference in their psychological well being of senior citizens from community and non community living. A sample of 100 senior citizens was taken randomly from different areas in the city of Jaipur, for non community living and the sample for community living was taken from Ashiana Utsav (senior citizen homes). Out of the entire sample 50 were from community living and 50 from non community living and out of them, 25 were males and 25 were females respectively for both the groups. Standardized tool used for the study was Psychological well being scale by Dr. D.S.Sisodia and Pooja Singh. Statistical analysis used was mean, SD and 't' test. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the psychological well being of senior citizens living in community living and non community living. There was also a significant difference between males and females in the different types of housing.

Keywords: *Senior Citizens, Community and Non Community living, Psychological Well Being*

Old age comprises "the later part of life"; the period of life after youth and middle age, usually with reference to deterioration. Beginning of old age cannot be universally defined because it shifts according to the context. The United Nations has agreed that 60+ years may be usually denoted as old age, and this is the first attempt at an international definition of old age. At the same time, the WHO recognized that the developing world often defines old age, not by years, but by new roles, loss of previous roles, or inability to make active contribution to society.

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Senior citizen is a common euphemism for an old person used in American English, and sometimes in British English. It implies or means that the person being referred to is retired. This in turn usually implies or in fact means that the person is over the retirement age, which varies according to country. The term 'senior citizen', has come into widespread use in recent decades. The distinguishing marks associated with old age comprise both physical and mental characteristics. The marks of old age are so unlike the marks of middle age that it has been suggested that, as an individual transitions into old age, he/she might well be thought of as different persons “time-sharing” the same identity.

Psychological well-being refers to how people evaluate their lives. According to Diener (1997), these evaluations may be in the form of cognitions or in the form of affect. The cognitive part is an information based appraisal of one's life that is when a person gives conscious evaluative judgments about one's satisfaction with life as a whole. The affective part is a hedonic evaluation guided by emotions and feelings such as frequency with which people experience pleasant / unpleasant moods in reaction to their lives. The assumption behind this is that most people evaluate their life as either good or bad, so they are normally able to offer judgments. Further, people invariably experience moods and emotions, which have a positive effect or a negative effect. Thus, people have a level of subjective well-being even if they do not often consciously think about it, and the psychological system offers virtually a constant evaluation of what is happening to the person.

Research in wellbeing has been growing in recent decades (e.g., Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; Keyes, Schmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Stratham & Chase, 2010; Seligman, 2011). The question of how wellbeing should be defined (or spelt) still remains largely unresolved, which has given rise to blurred and overly broad definitions of wellbeing' (Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, & Seligman 2011, p. 81). Two approaches emerged: the hedonic tradition, which accentuated constructs such as happiness, positive affect, low negative affect, and satisfaction with life (e.g., Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999); and the eudaimonic tradition, which highlighted positive psychological functioning and human development (e.g., Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1989a; 1989b; Waterman, 1993). However, despite the differences in approach, most researchers now believe that wellbeing is a multi-dimensional construct (e.g., Diener, 2009; Michaelson, Abdallah, Steuer, Thompson, & Marks, 2009; Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi 2009). Consequently, the diversity of dimensions has created a ,confusing and contradictory research base' (Pollard and Lee, 2003, p. 2). An early attempt to define wellbeing was Bradburn's (1969) classic research on psychological wellbeing. His work marked a move away from the diagnosis of psychiatric cases to the study of psychological reactions of ordinary people in their daily lives. Although Ryff (1989a) criticised Bradburn's work for not defining the basic structure of psychological wellbeing, an emphasis on positive and negative affect has been central to the work of Diener and Suh (1997). They believed that, subjective well-being consists of three

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interrelated components: life satisfaction, pleasant affect, and unpleasant affect. Affect refers to pleasant and unpleasant moods and emotions, whereas life satisfaction refers to a cognitive sense of satisfaction with life (Diener & Suh, 1997, p. 200) Headey and colleagues (Headey, Holmstrom, & Wearing, 1984a; 1984b; Headey, 2006) picked up on the need for positive and negative affects to be seen as distinct dimensions, rather than opposite ends of the same continuum (Bradburn, 1969) as they are 'only moderately negatively correlated' (Headey, 2006, p. 2). This was more recently supported by Lee and Ogozoglu (2007) and Singh and Duggal Jha (2008). Shah and Marks consider wellbeing to be: Well-being is more than just happiness. As well as feeling satisfied and happy, well-being means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community.

Seligman has recently published his latest book entitled Flourish (Seligman, 2011), in which he outlines his new 'dynamic' concept of wellbeing, which moves away from theories based purely on happiness. The rationale behind this welcome departure from a now rather over-used term is because, according to Seligman (2011), the notion of 'happiness' is an awkward construct that hides the true, complex, nature of human flourishing. He clearly states the rationale behind this change in direction: I used to think that the topic of positive psychology was happiness< I now think that the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing. (Seligman, 2011, p. 13) Flourish discusses his theory with great clarity, but in terms of resolving the debate on defining wellbeing, it is disappointing. His 24-page chapter entitled 'What is Well-being?' fails to achieve its aim. In fact, Seligman states: Well-being theory denies that the topic of positive psychology is a real thing; rather the topic is a construct – well-being – which in turn has several measurable elements, each a real thing, each contributing to well-being, but none defining well-being. (2011, p. 15)

Community living is a residential community for elders who are living independently within a lively community, but who would also like occasional help with daily challenges, ranging from housekeeping and cooking to maintenance and driving services. So ironical, having worked hard all life, hoping that someday one could put the feet up on a sunny porch and do nothing more than read a book. But when that day does arrive, missing the frenetic pace - feeling left out and without purpose. However prepared one may think he or she is for retirement, the reality is very different, and the emptiness looms large. That period of life that one yearned for all your working years, does not seem to hold the same appeal anymore. One begins to feel that this is the beginning of old age, and it is downhill from here. In non community living the elderly live in their respective houses with their family members.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To study the psychological well being of senior citizens (males) from community and non community living.
2. To study the psychological well being of senior citizens (females) from community living and non community living.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a significant difference in the psychological well being of senior citizens (males) from community and non community living.
2. There will be a significant difference in the psychological well being of senior citizens (females) from community living and non community living.

Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 100 senior citizens, males and females from community and non community living residences in the city of Jaipur, Rajasthan. Out of the 50 from community living, 25 were males and 25 were females. Same was the case in non community living. The residents of non community living were from the elderly living in different areas of Jaipur with their families and those from community living were from Ashiana Utsav, community living for the elderly. Standardized tool used for the study was Psychological well being scale by Dr.D.S.Sisodia and Pooja Choudhary. Statistical analysis used was mean, SD and 't' test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No.1 Table showing mean, SD and t values for psychological well being of senior citizens from community and non community living

Category	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of Significance
Community living	215.1	1342.2	7.3	S *
Non Community living	166.9	883.4		

**Significant at .01 level*

Table No.2 Table showing mean, SD and 't' values for psychological well being of senior citizens (males) from community and non community living

Category	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of Significance
Males in Community living	214.4	857.4	3.4	S *
Males in Non Community living	188.5	576.7		

**Significant at .01 level*

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Table No.3 Table showing mean, SD and t values for psychological well being of senior citizens (females) from community and non community living

Category	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of Significance
Females in Community living	200.7	484.8	5.62	S *
Females in Non Community living	178.4	306.7		

**Significant at .01 level*

Table No.4 Table showing mean, SD and t values for psychological well being of senior citizens (males and females) from community living

Category	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of Significance
Males in Community living	214.4	857.4	7.26	S *
Females in Community living	200.7	484.8		

**Significant at .01 level*

Table No.5 Table showing mean, SD and t values for psychological well being of senior citizens (males and females) from non community living

Category	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of significance
Males in Non Community living	188.5	576.7	1.20	NS
Females in Non Community living	178.4	306.7		

The mean and 't' values depicted in the tables mentioned above show a significant difference in the psychological well being of senior citizens from community and non community living, senior citizens (males) from community and non community living, senior citizens (females) from community and non community living and senior citizens (males and females) from community living. No significant difference was found in the psychological well being of senior citizens (males and females) from non community living.

Each phase of life has challenges that come with the potential for fear. Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994), in his view of socialization, broke the typical life span into eight phases. Each phase presents a particular challenge that must be overcome. In the final stage, old age, the challenge is to embrace integrity over despair. Some people are unable to successfully overcome the challenge. They may have to confront regrets, such as being disappointed in their children's lives or perhaps their own. They may have to accept that they will never reach certain career goals. Or they must come to terms with what their career success has cost them, such as time with their family or declining personal health. Others, however, are able to achieve a strong sense of integrity, embracing the new phase in life. When that happens, there is tremendous potential for creativity. They can learn new skills, practice new activities, and peacefully prepare for the end of life.

Aging comes with many challenges. The loss of independence is one potential part of the process, as are diminished physical ability and age discrimination. Many older adults remain

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highly self-sufficient. Others require more care. Because the elderly typically no longer hold jobs, finances can be a challenge. Due to cultural misconceptions, older people can be targets of ridicule and stereotypes. The elderly face many challenges in later life, but they do not have to. According to the activity theory, activity levels and social involvement are key to happiness (Havinghurst 1961; Havinghurst, Neugarten, and Tobin 1968; Neugarten 1964). According to this theory, the more active and involved an elderly person is, the happier he or she will be. Critics of this theory point out that access to social opportunities and activity are not equally available to all. The theory proposes that activity is a solution to the well-being of seniors without being able to account for how the distribution of access to these social opportunities and activities reflects broader issues of power and inequality in society. Moreover, not everyone finds fulfillment in the presence of others or participation in activities. Reformulations of this theory suggest that participation in informal activities, such as hobbies, are what most effect later life satisfaction (Lemon, Bengtson, and Petersen 1972). A microanalytical theory by Rose (1962) subculture of aging theory, focuses on the shared community created by the elderly when they are excluded (due to age), voluntarily or involuntarily, from participating in other groups. This theory suggests that elders will disengage from society and develop new patterns of interaction with peers who share common backgrounds and interests. For example, a group consciousness may develop within such groups as CARP around issues specific to the elderly including health care, retirement security, continuing care, and elder abuse focused on creating social and political pressure to fix those issues. Whether brought together by social or political interests, or even geographic regions, elders may find a strong sense of community with their new group.

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