

A Study on Happiness and Optimism of Institutionalized Senior Citizens

J.Jerusal Albert Britto^{1*}, Sharon John², Dr.B.Selvaraj Ph.D³

ABSTRACT

The very concept of an old age home is new to India. An old age home is usually the place, a home for the old people who have no one to look after them or those who have been thrown out of their homes by their children. The place is of course like home where the inmates get all the facility for their routine living like food clothing and shelter (Owen, 2000). A tendency expect a best possible outcome or dwell on the most hopeful aspects of a situation is called optimistic. The major scope of the study was to carried out to investigate the happiness and optimism of institutionalised old people because of the rapid growth in the institutions. The tools used to were personal data sheet was used to collect the relevant data and background details of the selected samples like their gender, marital status, qualification, and social background, Oxford happiness inventory was used to assess the level of happiness of the sample, The scale consist of 29 statements which have responded with rating scale method, the level of optimism of the sample was measured using optimism pessimism scale, the scale consist of 14 statements which have positive and negative items and interpreted as low, average and high. Percentage analysis, Correlation and t test were used to analyze the results. The very concept of an old age home is new to India. An old age home is usually the place, a home for the old people who have no one to look after them or those who have been thrown out of their homes by their children. The place is of course like home where the inmates get all the facility for their routine living like food clothing and shelter (Owen, 2000). A tendency expects a best possible outcome or dwell on the most hopeful aspects of a situation is called optimistic. The major scope of the study was to carried out to investigate the happiness and optimism of institutionalised old people because of the rapid growth in the institutions. The tools used to were personal data sheet was used to collect the relevant data and background details of the selected samples like their gender, marital status, qualification , and social background, Oxford happiness inventory was used to assess the level of happiness of the sample, The scale consist of 29 statements which have responded with rating scale method,

¹ (Guest Lecturer Of Psychology, Government Arts College, Coimbatore, India)

² (II M.S.W, Hindusthan College Of Arts And Science, Coimbatore, India)

³ (Associate Professor Of Psychology, Government Arts College, Coimbatore, India)

*Responding Author

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the level of optimism of the sample was measured using optimism pessimism scale, the scale consist of 14 statements which have positive and negative items and interpreted as low, average and high. Percentage analysis, Correlation and t test were used to analyze the results.

Keywords: *Institutionalised Old age, Happiness, optimism, Pessimism*

The term elderly was apparently coined in 1938 and senior citizen is replacing the term Old age. The contrast to the chronological milestones which mark life stages in the developed world.. Old age in many developing countries in seen to begin at the point when active contribution is no longer possible (Gorman, 2000). Most developed world countries have accepted the chronological old age 65 years as a definition of elderly or older person.

The age of 60 or 65, roughly equivalent to retirement ages in most developed countries is said to be the beginning of old age, In many parts of the developing countries, chronological time has little or no importance in the meaning of old age. Other socially constructed meanings of age are more significant such as the roles assigned to older people.

HAPPINESS IN OLD AGE

The fourth criterion that may be used to assess the kind of adjustment elderly people make is the degree of self satisfaction or happiness they experience. According to Erickson, Old age is characterized by either ego integrity or despair. When the achievement of the elderly has come up to the standards they set for themselves and so that the gap between their real selves and their ideal selves is small, they experience ego integrity and are reasonably happy and satisfied with themselves and their achievement.

Even those who have been successfully or reasonably successfully may become dissatisfied in old age. As the sands of time run out, they too experience despair, though not the same extent as those who believe themselves to be failures and near failures, “Despair is there for everyone, no matter how much has accomplished.”

OPTIMISM IN OLD AGE

A tendency to expect the best possible outcome or dwell on the most hopeful aspects of a situation is called Optimism. Getting Old, Losing Physical and mental abilities have been linked to feeling and depressed in old age, However, a new study has found that ageing may be associated with happiness for many people. About 40 million adults in the U.S are over age 65 now. According to estimates 77 million Americans will turn 65 in the next decade which translates to about 10,000 people celebrating birthday each day for the next 10 years.

METHODS

Objectives

- To assess the level of happiness of institutionalized senior citizens.
- To assess the level of optimism of institutionalized senior citizens.

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- To identify the gender difference in the levels of happiness and optimism of institutionalised senior citizen.
- To find out the relationship between happiness and optimism of institutionalised senior citizen.

Research Question

- What is the level of happiness in the selected sample?
- What is level of Optimism in the selected sample?
- Do the levels of optimism and happiness of the sample differ with respect to gender?
- Does any relationship exist between optimism and happiness in the selected sample?

Hypotheses:

1. The level of happiness of the institutionalised senior citizens will be low.
2. The level of optimism of the institutionalised senior citizen will be low.
3. There will be a statistical significant positive relationship between happiness and optimism in the sample.
4. There will be a statistical significant gender differences in the levels of happiness and optimism of the sample.

Sample

From two old age homes namely, Jacob Care Centre and Missionaries of charity (Mother Teresa Home) in Coimbatore was taken for the research. 60 Inmates were selected for the research by using purposive sampling technique (30 male and 30 female). Purposive sampling method is the technique in which the individual units are selected by some purposive method. Most of them are (50%) are from low socio economic background, (45%) are from middle socio economic status and (5%) are from low socio economic status.

Area Of The Sample

Two old age homes in Coimbatore namely Mother Teresa Home and Jacob Care Centre were selected. The reasons for selecting this area are,

1. Residing place of the investigator.
2. Availability of the required number of the sample.
3. Co-Operative rendered by the sample to the researcher.
4. Convenience of administering the test to the sample.

Tools

Personal data sheet was used to collect the relevant background details of the selected sample like their gender, marital status, qualification and social background. Oxford happiness inventory was used to assess the level of happiness of the sample. This scale consist of 29 statements which have to responded with 6 alternatives namely- Strongly disagree to strongly agree. The total scores are summed and interpreted using the norms. The level of optimism of the sample was measured using optimism – Pessimism scale by Dr.H.Sell & Dr.R.Nagpal. The scale consist of 40 statements which have positive and negative items and interpreted as low, average, and high according to the norms.

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Procedure

Initially permission was obtained from the authorities of the homes and the researcher made rapport among the samples of the inmates. The personal data sheet was given to each of the inmates followed by the Oxford happiness inventory and Optimism – pessimism scale. The researcher dictated the each statement to the sample and their responses were recorded carefully. Their scores were recorded as per the norms and were interpreted. Out of 60 samples (30 male and 30 female) whose responses to both the questionnaire were completed were selected as the sample. The results are tabulated and taken for further discussion.

Experimental Design

A Single group pre test design was used in this study.

Analysis Of The Data

The tabulated results were statistically analyzed using percentage analysis, Correlation and t-Test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No- 1, Level of happiness of the sample (N=60)

Level Of Happiness	Number	Percentage
Not Happy	02	4%
Somewhat Happy	12	20%
Not particularly happy or unhappy	45	75%
Moderately happy	01	1%
Very happy	-	-
Too happy	-	-

(Percentages are rounded off)

It is displeasing that none of the sample is very happy or too happy. They seem to be highly traumatic and in low mood and greatly disturbed. They often feel confused and forgetful. It is observed from the table that most of the sample (75%) is not particularly happy or unhappy, they seem to have neutral emotion, and some of them have acute physical problems and also have inner tension, reduced sleep, reduced appetite and concentration difficulties. Hence the Hypothesis “The level of happiness of the institutionalised senior citizen will be low” is Retained.

TABLE – II, Level of happiness of the male and female sample (N=60)

Level of Happiness	Male – 30		Female = 30	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Not happy	02	6%	-	-
Somewhat Happy	07	24%	05	16%
Not particularly happy or unhappy	21	70%	24	80%
Moderately Happy	-	-	1	4%
Very Happy	-	-	-	-
Too Happy	-	-	-	-

(Percentages are rounded off)

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It is observed from the table that more percentage of female sample (80%) are not particularly happy or unhappy compared to the male sample (70%) and (24%) of male sample are somewhat happy and (16%) of the female sample are somewhat happy, (6%) of the male sample are not happy. It is observed that none of the male and female sample is not very happy and too happy. There is no difference between the male and female sample.

TABLE – III, Mean difference in happiness of the male and female sample

Gender	Mean Happiness	Standard Deviation	t Value
MALE	3.18	0.46	0.12
FEMALE	3.36	0.41	

It is observed that the mean happiness in male is 3.18 and the standard deviation is 0.46, and the mean happiness in female is 3.36 and the standard deviation is 0.41, the t value is 0.12. The experience of happiness in both the genders is more or less the same. There is no statistical significant difference in mean happiness between happiness between male and female sample. Thus, the hypothesis stating “There will be a statistical significant gender difference in the level of happiness of the sample” is Rejected.

TABLE IV, Level of optimism of the sample (N=60)

Level Of Optimism	Number	Percentage
Very high optimistic	1	2%
High optimistic	05	08%
Average optimistic	04	06%
Below average	17	29%
Very low optimistic	27	45%
Pessimistic	06	10%

Percentages are rounded off

It is observed from the table that (45%) of the total sample have very low optimism, (29%) of the sample have below average optimism. Hence the Hypothesis stating “The level of optimism of institutionalised senior citizen will be low” is rejected.

(10%) of the sample is pessimistic, because they don’t care about themselves or have self denial. They also seem to lack positive emotion and always feel that life is not satisfied or fulfilled. (8%) of the sample is highly optimistic and (2%) are very optimistic. They seem to enjoy life happily and feel contented and experience a ray of hope in their lives even at this stage of life as compared to their counterparts who have negative thoughts about their life.

TABLE – V, Level of optimism of the male and female sample (N=60)

Level of Optimism	Male – 30		Female = 30	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Very high Optimistic	-	-	01	03%
High optimistic	02	07%	03	10%
Average optimistic	02	07%	02	07%
Below average	10	33%	07	24%
Very low optimistic	12	40%	15	50%
Pessimistic	04	13%	02	06%

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It is observed from the table that (50%) of the female sample are very low in optimism compared to the male sample (40%). Pessimism is seen in (13%) of the males as compared to (6%) female sample. Both the genders experience negative thoughts and feel very bad about their life experience and still worry about it. They do not seem to enjoy the rest of the lives. Below average optimism is found in (33%) of the male sample compared to the (24%) female sample. (10%) of the female sample have high optimism where none of the male sample falls in high optimistic category. (3%) of the female sample are very high optimistic, where none of the male samples are very high optimistic.

TABLE- VI, Mean difference in optimism of the male and female sample

Gender	Mean Optimism	Standard Deviation	t Value
MALE	117.1	15.5	0.05
FEMALE	128.4	25.2	

It is observed that the mean optimism of the male sample is 117.1 and the standard deviation is 15.5, the mean optimism in female sample is 128.4 and the standard deviation is 25.2 and the t value is 0.05. This reveals that the level of optimism between male and female sample is not statistically significant. Therefore the hypothesis stating “There will be a statistical gender difference in the level of optimism of the sample” is rejected.

TABLE- VII, Correaltion between happiness and optimism of the sample

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	r- value
HAPPINESS	3.27	0.44	0.10
OPTIMISM	122.7	21.5	

The mean happiness of the sample is 3.27 and that of optimism is 122.7. The calculated r value is 0.10, indicating a weak positive correlation between the two variables. Though , the correlation between happiness and optimism is positive, it is not statistically significant and hence the hypothesis stating “ There will be a statistical positive relationship between happiness and optimism of the sample” is Rejected.

CONCLUSION

- Majority of the sample (75%) are not particularly happy or Unhappy.
- (80%) of the female sample and (70%) of the male sample fall in the category of not particularly happy or unhappy.
- The mean happiness and the standard deviation of the male sample are 3.18 and 0.46 respectively. The mean happiness and the standard deviation of the female sample are 3.36 and 0.41 respectively and the t value is 0.12.
- Majority of the sample (45%) of the sample come under very low optimistic category and (29%) of the samples come under below average level. (10%) of the total sample comes under pessimistic category.
- (50%) of the female sample and (40%) of the male sample come in the category of very low optimistic.

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- The mean optimism and the standard deviation of the male sample are 117.1 and 15.5 respectively. The mean optimism and standard deviation of the female sample are 128.4 and 25.2 respectively and the t value is 0.05.
- The mean happiness and the standard deviation of the total sample are 3.27 and 0.44 and the mean optimism and standard deviation of the total sample are 122.7 and 21.5 respectively.
- The correlation between the variables happiness and optimism is 0.10 indicating a weak positive correlation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The results of this study cannot be generalized as the sample have been selected only from the selected old age homes in Coimbatore. Large and varied sample could have been included.
- The samples have been selected only from old age homes. Those living with their family have been left out. Hence the results could not be compared and generalised
- Only descriptive study was carried out. Intervention program could have been given to the sample.
- Some more psychological variables could have been included, as it is only a descriptive study.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors colorfully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

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