

# Life Satisfaction among the Aged

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**Abstract:** Old age is a period when people move away from a previously more desirable period to a lesser desirable period. Life satisfaction among the aged is an important construct in the psycho-social study of ageing. In gerontology, life satisfaction is a concept frequently used to assess subjective well-being (Silverman, 2008). Present study focuses on identifying and comparing the level of satisfaction among senior citizens from institutionalised setting and non-institutionalised setting. Data was collected from a total sample of 120. Sixty five respondents from institutionalised setting and 55 respondents from non- institutionalised setting were selected. The data was collected from the respondents using Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS).

**Keywords:** Old age, Life Satisfaction, Institutionalised, Non-Institutionalised.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Ageing is a natural process that influences the individual, family and society in different ways. It is a developmental phase in life that begins with conception and ends with death (Pankajam, 2004). Old age is a period when people move away from a previously more desirable period to a lesser desirable period. Age sixty is usually considered the dividing line between middle age and old age. Old age has a dual definition. It is the last stage in the life process of an individual and it is an age group or generation comprising a segment of the oldest members of a population (Galbraith, 2007).

Old age means reduced physical ability, declining mental ability, the gradual giving up of role playing in socio-economic activities, and a shift in economic status moving from economic independence to economic dependence upon other's for support. Old age is called "dark" not because the light fails to shine but because people refuse to see it (Gowri, 2003).

Life satisfaction among the aged is an important construct in the psycho-social study of ageing. In gerontology, life satisfaction is a concept frequently used to assess subjective well-being (Silverman, 2008). Life satisfaction continues to be an important construct in the psycho-social study of aging. It is one of the commonly accepted subjective conditions of quality of life and seems to be one of the facets of successful aging, both of which are key concepts in aging. Research reports that life satisfaction is strongly related to socio-demographic and psycho-social variables (Iyer, 2003).

Elders have started walking out of their own home in search of a journey that promises peace, joy and celebration of life with a group of people who shares the same boat of life. However not many rather none of them receive it. Another fact is that the relatives also force to admit the old people into old age homes. This old age home which considered physically and psychologically fit for well-being of aged also satisfies the needs of the old people. This is the reason for the escalation of old age homes in our society (Easterlin, 2006).

Most developed countries have generally accepted the chronological age of 65 years as the definition of an 'older person' (WHO, 2009). In addition to chronological age, the age of a person can be defined in many ways, encompassing biological, psychological and socio-cultural processes (Cohen, 2002).

Population-based studies including mixed samples of older people have demonstrated that several aspects contribute to life satisfaction. For instance, in a study including 105 older people, aged 90 and above, impaired health showed a low correlation to life satisfaction. However, personality was more strongly related to life satisfaction. Thus, several factors contribute to life satisfaction in older people (Hillera, 2001) and the composition of factors as well as their relative weight may change when the older people's life conditions change. It is well known, for instance, that reduced capacity to

perform activities of daily living and restricted ability to be alone in older people coincides with lower satisfaction of life (Hellstrom and Hallberg 2001).

## II. METHODOLOGY

Coimbatore was the area selected for the present study as it is one of the fastest growing cities of Tamil Nadu. It was observed that the number of old age homes is increasing at a faster rate in Coimbatore. This could be attributed to the rapid urbanisation and nuclearisation happening in the city. The sample for the present study comprised of a total of 120 elderly persons above the age of 60 years. Sixty five elderly respondents including both elderly men (32) and elderly women (33) were selected from the institutionalised setting and another 55 respondents of elderly men (22) and elderly women (33) were selected from the non-institutionalised setting.

Elderly senior citizens from Old Age homes were selected from Chettipalayam road, Podanur and Vadavalli. For residential sample Saibaba colony, Ukkadam and Nallampalayam, were selected randomly for the study. The Psychological Well-Being Scale of Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodia and Ms. Pooja Choudhary (SDCP) by National Psychological Corporation, Agra, was used for collecting data for the present study.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The satisfaction of basic needs of elders in old age homes and residential setting has been discussed in the table below. It showed their level of satisfaction of food, clothing, love, finance, recreation, social and interpersonal relationship.

**Table- I. SATISFACTION OF BASIC NEEDS**

Particulars		Group			
		Old age Home (65)		Residential (55)	
		N	%	No	%
Food	Yes	65	100.0	55	100.0
Clothing	Yes	65	100.0	55	100.0
Medical Facilities	Yes	65	100.0	55	100.0
Love and Affection	Yes	65	100.0	55	100.0
	No	-	-	-	-
Finance	Yes	12	19	55	100.0
	No	53	82		
Recreation	Yes	65	100.0	52	95
	No			3	5
Social relationship	Yes	65	100.0	55	100.0
Respect from the Members	Yes	65	100.0	55	100.0

**Table I** shows that the satisfaction of basic needs. These elderly respondents were asked about how far they were satisfied with the basic needs being met at the old age homes and residential setting, it was observed that all the elderly respondents responded that they were fully satisfied with the food, clothing, availability of medical facilities, the love and affection they received, recreational activities, social relationship with the other members and respect received from the other members of the old age homes as well as their families. But it was also noted that a majority of 82 percent of the institutionalized elders were not satisfied with the finance they received. The positive responses from most of the respondent could indicate that they were all being provided most of the basic needs except for finance.

Life satisfaction is the state of being satisfied or content. The satisfaction level of elderly in both old age homes and residential setting was compared and the results are presented in table II.

**Table- II. LIFE SATISFACTION**

Details	Mean	S.D	No.	T
Old age Home	37.22	6.77	65	2.577*
Residential	40.02	4.77	55	

\* Significant at 5 % level

By seeing the **Table II** we can conclude that mean scores of satisfaction of the elderly people staying with the family members was higher than that of those staying in the Old Age homes. The score on t- test ( $t=2.577^*$ ) showed that there was a significant difference in the level of satisfaction of elderly living in old age homes and in residential setting. Feelings of no purpose in life, not happy with their present situation and neglect from family members could be reasons for lesser satisfaction in the elderly of Old Age homes.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

‘Successful ageing’ has come to the forefront as a goal for the ageing population. While an agreed definition of successful ageing remains elusive, there is broad agreement that its core constituents include physical health and functioning, psychological wellbeing, and social functioning and participation. With increase in life expectancy, delayed onset of morbidity, and higher expectations for old age, interest in well-being in later life and how to achieve it has intensified.

Rapid urbanisation and changes in lifestyles have led to a host of problems faced by elderly in India. With the adequate support of the family members and the society the elderly can overcome these problems. This study was an attempt to understand the level of satisfaction among senior citizens of our society and to compare it with their living arrangements. The results from the present study concluded that there was a significant difference in the life satisfaction among senior citizens staying in old age homes and in residential setting.

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