



## A Qualitative Analysis: Issues Faced by the Old Age People in Modern Society

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### ABSTRACT

Although an issue of old age people have become an alarming social issue in Pakistan. There is no single effort have been made to collect/compile data of this phenomena. This problem is occurring owing to incessant changing family structure. The prevalence of nuclear families, the old-age family members are facing the circumstances of carelessness and underestimation. Based on in-depth interviews from old age people in local residence, Multan, study highlights the social, psychological and physical isolation. Thirty old-age peoples were select from Multan city with the help of purposive sampling. Based on in-depth interviews guide was old-age participants comprising questions related to the social, physical and psychological issues. Life histories of the participants were also taken. Related government and private institutions could play a significant role in educating the family to help reduce the issues of old age persons.

**Keywords:** Old age; Social issue; Isolation; Family response

### INTRODUCTION

The carelessness of the old age people is prevalent in all over the world, so Pakistan is no exception from it. Despite its political and economic instabilities, Pakistan has succeeded in improving lifespan, a fact evident by its rising older population. With no tradition of old-age homes and minimal attention given to geriatrics except at the largest public and private hospitals in this country's bigger cities, the question is how will we meet the basic facilities e.g. food, health, cloths, social relation, needs of our ageing population. Currently Pakistan is predominantly relying on co-residence with family and kin for elderly care. Most of the aged living with their sons, provision of care extends from fulfillment of financial needs to health as well as emotional needs. While most of the tangible transfers occur from the younger to the older generation, there is reciprocity especially with regard to childcare for working couples and at the emotive level, given the culture of respect accorded to the elderly [1].

However, falling birth rates and rising life expectancy rates have increased the dependency ratios of the elderly. With fewer children per couple and increased pressures of migration, elderly co-residence is exhibiting a modest decline in its trend. Similarly, urbanization may well lead to a breakdown of traditional norms

as workers become increasingly mobile and 'extraneous' cultural forces lead to a greater valuation of privacy, we may well see a substantial shift towards nuclear rather than joint family systems. Old age people often experienced quite different type of difficulties such as children's migration to urban areas for their better education, health and better economic opportunities. These factors can cause certain psychological unpleasant upheavals among them. The world reports needed to consider on issues of health particularly in bringing up healthy ageing for the good concept of total operating ability. In this, wise, in context of health, will have tremendous economic returns, for the uplift of elderly people, so that they can be instrumental in active in social participation. Ageing is undeniable, astronomical and natural phenomenon. As the elderly people get to be aged, they exactly changed biologically, psychologically and physiologically. Health is nothing for elderly but a treasure and for society; they have prime concerns to live an exuberant life at this stage. At the same time, the qualitative life along with a good environment, particularly determines the health and other concerns. Irrespective of healthy life, other factors viz., contentment, friendly environment and attempts to find best way to pass their leisure time, are more important than other pursuits in their lives.

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According to the study of Rochelle et al., elderly people have been found healthy amply, direction by family, studied as societal-friendliness, public administration's services, mutual assistance, sense of attachment or association, faith, apprehended social inclusion notably volunteerism and observed social inclusion.

Life expectancy in the United States has dramatically increased during the twentieth century, though individuals have been living longer lives and rates of many chronic health conditions have increased. As such, the expansion of life expectancy has increased the number of years spent living with chronic physical diseases and therefore disability and it is unbelievably astonishing estimation. Reichard aging has been describing in the overall collection of social, biological and psychological changes that happen in last phase of life.

Gender difference is also prevailing in the difficulties of old age. Men and women experience old age differently. Old age women tend to have stronger social networks than men do. It is evident that mothers are more likely than father is to receive material and emotional support from their adult children [2].

In various areas, the biological anthropologists have concentrated marvelous services into the study of ageing who ever emphasized on acute diseases, bone biology, reproductive biology and body composition. The processes of senescence and ageing obviously involve the complicated intercommunication among biological, environmental and cultural spheres, the anthropologists with distinctive perspective of bio-culture and evolution, are quite enough conscious in studying the age variations and senescence.

Although issue of old age peoples is widespread in Pakistan, there is a lack of research on this topic. Within the society, most common problems faced by the old age peoples are health, food, shelter, clothes and social isolation within family. The main problems for aged people they face are definitely ignorance in the family and State's turning eyes from providing the social security and handling their health issues. Most of the older persons have been living in poor conditions, as they do not have any sufficient source of income, so they can suffer from malnutrition, poor physical health that results into adverse psychological condition. Another study also shows that only poverty is not the problem for aging people there are a countless of social factors that increase the risk of older populations [3].

State is responsible for the provision of basic health facilities *i.e.*, food, shelter, health but unfortunately this is not practical in Pakistan due to the incapability of the state. The deficiency of state and social support for the whole population particularly for the old age peoples has traditionally compensated through the presence of a strong and unconditional family support. However, the traditional joint family system is changing into nuclear family. Owing to this changing family structure, the health of the elderly deteriorated because old age ignored in term of care and proper food and clean environment.

Most of the older adults have problem of maltreatment which includes; physical, sexual, financial and material abuse, psychological, emotional, abandonment, neglect and serious loss of dignity and self-respect however due to culture values and other reasons they scared or are unable to report.

Ultimately this maltreatment can lead to physical injuries and sometimes long-lasting psychological consequences *i.e.*, isolation, depression and anxiety. This study will contribute to understand the issue of old age peoples in Multan city by asking old age peoples. Study will also highlights the important factors of negligence and impact on old ages daily life. People are not aware about the problems, which associated with early aging therefore ratio of early aging increased day by day. The study also highlights the issue which caused by early aging [4].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Through a series of exertions and ceaseless endeavors of the researcher in her concerned field, the primary data for the study collected from the Multan city-a heavily populated city situated in the south of Punjab province. This data exclusively collected from the native aged people of the locations, mentioned above, through the interview guide method. In total, 20 in-depth interviews conducted for this study based on a purposive sampling technique. Through this extensive research, to unpack the issue and difficulties of old age peoples while living with families and understands about the societal behaviour reaction. The nature of research was exceedingly qualitative in degree; participants asked about the social, cultural, psychological, biological and physical issues faced by the old age peoples. Out of the 20 old age persons, 10 were male and 10 were female. After taking them in full confidence, face-to-face interviews conducted with the old age persons at their homes. All of the selected participants were living in homes with family. The researcher spoke in native language with participants and later translated into English. The old age persons were between 45 and 90 years of age. After thoroughly translation of the data, the meaningful and conclusive themes developed to analyze the data. These developed themes interpreted in the section of discussion [5].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Types of socio-economic difficulties reported by the study participants

Different types of social issues faced by the old age peoples in Pakistani society, such as self-respect, diet problem, emotional, health, family and social isolation (participant 8). The most common issue faced by the old age peoples reported by the most of the participants was blood pressure issue, joints problem, sugar and hepatitis. One of the participant 11 said "there were few diseases which caused the early old age such as obesity and the arthritis disease by which a man would not be able to even walk for few meters. Old age is cause by tension and stress and she affected by the stress, though her age was not long but she was looked like an aged woman. The main reason was the non-availability of children. She was very upset at that stage." Sound health is a big cause in taking the sound domestic decisions and sound financial position was yet another important factor to run the family smoothly. The apparent physical changes are occurring by the strokes of tension and stress which cause the early grey hair and physical enfeeblement.

As one female participant 2 shared that, “there was no relationship of old age with the age. I am 33 years old but looked like to be of 50 years. The causes are the mental stresses and the domestic quarrels, which had made her the patient of blood

pressure and diabetes. These conditions have got me to be too old before time” (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Depressive symptom prevalence by sociodemographic characteristics and health behaviors before and during the pandemic.

Characteristic or behavior	CLSA baseline	CLSA first follow-up	CLSA COVID-19 baseline	CLSA COVID-19 exit
<b>Age group</b>				
<55 years	14.47	13.84	26.72	29.39
55-64 years	13.56	12.44	22.95	23.21
65-74 years	12.01	11.64	18.52	20.58
≥ 75 years	12.7	15	18.66	20.71
<b>Sex</b>				
Female	15.98	15.71	25.08	26.02
Male	10.15	9.6	14.82	16.82
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
White	12.92	12.61	20.12	21.61
Non-white	18.35	16.06	23.01	23.94

Old age is not beneficial at any stage or level. There were certain families that they denied worst their existence. If the children were good, the old age had its own variety of afflictions. Aging has been describing in the overall collection of social, biological and psychological changes that happen in last phase of life'. As one male participant 4 shared that “the childhood seemed too charming and the old age bitter and unbearable [6].”

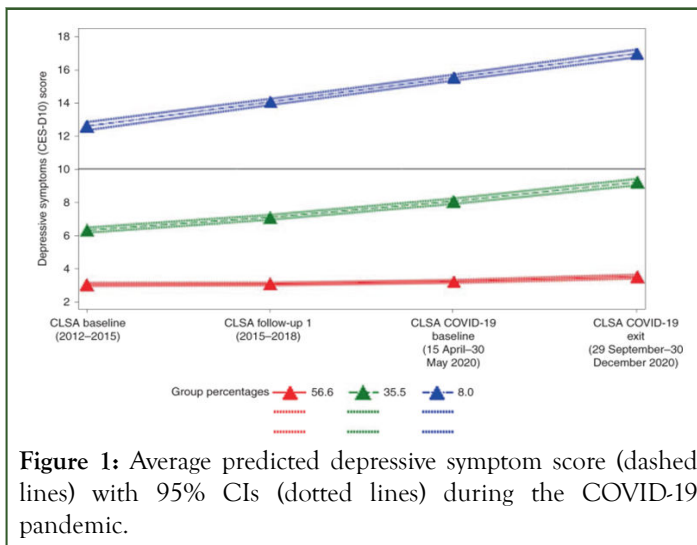
The older persons marginalized are in society in the form of social activities, decision-making, recreational activities and political activities and have no access of medical facilities. Also strengthened the current results and were of the view that in old age there is an amplified threat for older persons to be excluding from the basic services of life, material requirements and their social contact and interaction with society.

Participant 9 shared “they did not visit their relatives frequently. They suffered from the phobia that if they had met any relative, he would die instantly. They had always a worry about their health. In the old age, the elements of relationship were getting strength if their health permitted them. In the prevailing relationships, there was neither the mutual love nor the longing to see each other.

One's own children were not serving their parents then what if they visited the relatives.” However, participant 7 “If our family was intended to visit any relative, they used to leave them at home by declaring the head of the family.”

Income and financial resources have long been connection with social isolation amongst old age peoples. Due to the physical impairments, the old age persons are excluding from work and financial activities, which affect their life. For the old age persons, poor economic conditions of their family, determined the poverty, social exclusion and other outrageous conditions. In the view of stated that is the impact economic compulsions when a coupled with inflation not only effects the individual but also put and influence the sub-groups of persons and society. Participant 13 shared that “there was no source of income for me. I could not do the works due to the old age but I had to face the difficulties to fulfill the social and medical needs. His children did not ever cooperate with him. He completely depended upon his children. For the trivial needs, he had to stretch his hand towards them.”

The finding of the study reveal that old age person in their old age had to face economic compulsion due to their children who are economically dependent on them. They are suffering from poverty, which in a way affects their life; even they do not have job opportunity in their old age. The results is strengthened by Marzouk report that growing old is associated with a range of challenges that make it harder to earn a living and social protection system have a crucial role to play here. Poor working conditions, health, low job satisfaction, pension arrangement and negative perceptions about older workers are factors of declining labor force participation among older persons (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Average predicted depressive symptom score (dashed lines) with 95% CIs (dotted lines) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### The aged persons become a victim of loneliness in old age

Social isolation is the separation of individual from domain of society. The aged person when marginalized from social activities, gatherings and functions, employments opportunities, household decision making which put negative effects on the health of aged persons. As, participant 5 shared "I am physically young, but ignorance of my son's is the main reason of my health. They do not talk to me." Moreover, due to social exclusion the aged persons remain in a state of solitude, which affects their mental state of mind [7]. Various participants shared that old age as illness and diseases, as stress and depression increases due to social isolation and ignorance, increase dependency, less social involvement and poor physical and mental health respectively. One of the female participant 2 shared that, "I am 70 years old and my health condition is good. However, my family treats me, as I am last stage of horrible disease patient. They give me a separate room out of the other house."

As, old age is generally associated with phase of illness and disease because the metabolism rate and immune system is low in old age which makes them unable to physically remain active as a result leads to social exclusion. In this way social exclusion further, affect the health of aged person by causing different diseases. As, one participant 15 shared "loneliness made the old one gradually. It was not necessary that one should be old physically but he was old mentally too." Moreover, mental old age was the name of a man's repentance. Interestingly, a few of the participants in the field who looked like a young but they themselves were calling the old ones. As participant 3 added, "the behavior of their children had made them feel loneliness. The bitterness, strict disposition and their character made them to feel the helplessness."

Perceptions of aging influence societal behaviors and expectations towards older people as well as older adults' well-being and coping with the aging process. The majority of studies in this field have focused on individual differences in perceptions of aging with in cultures, but there is growing evidence that views of aging may be differ cross culture as well.

Perception of aging are multi-dimensional in nature emphasize both positive and negative characteristics reflected the mix between accurate depictions of age related changes and distorted view of older people. As one of the female participant 7 shared that "they told that as the people saw us, they start to call us as an uncle. The society had titled them as an old person after a little time. The neighbors used to call them not by their names but an old man. Secondly, there was yet another title for them Baba ji (old man). They liked that title because in this title, there was a love and affection for them. That title has a positive effect in it. The researcher herself was calling them Baba ji....Baba ji.

However, one male participant shared another view, "In old age, the senses were weakened from time to time; efficiency of their five senses was disconnected. For example, the sights of the many participants were weaker. Some participants had the hearing problems. Those, who were financially strong, had used the hearing aids. The rest was deprived of that blessing". As the skin of the many participants was hanging. There were wrinkles on the faces. The chin had become too soft. Lips mostly kept tight, which were too much aged [8].

Social isolation and health status are co-related; it revealed that there is relationship and association between social isolation and diseases status. When older persons are isolation from the main domain of society, it affects their health in the form of much disease. Several international studies also revealed that there is strong relationship between social engagement, psychological health and physical health outcomes. For example, participant 8 shared that, my children could not tolerate them even for two days though the parents had brought them up for life since their birth. They told the researcher an example in Punjabi language that when their child had reached the severity of illness and was breathing his last, the parents iced to pray for his sound health and long life and when the turn of their parents came at old age to feed them, they prayed that O' Allah! Give them death!

### Psychological issues faced by the peoples

These losses are composes with physical disablement and frail health and can result in feelings of loneliness, isolation and demoralization [9]. Old persons are prey to social isolation and loneliness in old age, which is due to the death of partners, loss of friend and family and loss of income. Loneliness and social isolation affect the physical, mental health and quality of life of older persons.

Depression is the prevalent psychological disease that affects the older persons in their later age. There are many indicators which diagnosis depression among older persons as Birren states that "sadness, tear-fullness, feeling of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty concentrating and making decision, changes in appetite and energy levels, physical restlessness or retardation and sleep problems all indicate that older persons are suffering from depression. As participant 5, 8 and 11 shared "they said that they were affected not by their speeches but the behavior because they were not habitual of those behaviors. Then, they pondered over those behavioral for hours. They used to torture themselves. They felt that they were indeed a burden in this world. Their time was up [10]."

Many people experience loneliness either because of living alone, a lack of close family ties. Retirement is one of the most stressful and important events in the life of older persons which affects their social life and psychological health. The older persons when retired from work become surrounded with many economic issues that affect their mental health in the form of depression, stress, anxiety, insomnia and uselessness. Participant 20 explained, "I was a government servant. After the retirement, I had apportioned my all capital amongst my children equally. Recently, I met a road accident and physically affected badly and have been stuck to the bed since long. I have been receiving my pension regularly but before reaching into my hands, it shrinks too much by which I cannot manage my all needs properly."

Another interesting but very serious issue came from the several participants. They said that usage of mobile phone is one of the major reasons of ignorance to the old age family members, because they used the mobile while setting with him. Male participant 1 shared "The generation was collecting the data from the mobile instead of the old people. Then we made the mistakes. Our old age ancestors persuade not to involve in risky activity. However, we regarded their advice nothing just the time wasting remarks. They were not trying to understand their old family members. It came to know after a lapse of circumstances, when the life had been double-crossed." Similarly, participant 3 shared, "they were not with them even they were living with them." Most of the time paternal grandfather and his grandson were sitting on a bed together but there was a strange distance between both of them. They were physically together but his grandchildren had given their full time to the mobiles. Participant 10 explained, "They said that in their old age, their grandchildren were their support but in the modern times, the mobile had been a support of the children. They used to give their time more than us [11]."

### The interaction of gender, age and social class

Male participants thought that male old age people faced the more difficulties as compare to female. As participant 6 explained, "I am living in joint family and my sons is out of country for job. So, my care taker is female and they not treat well."

Social position is also important factor for prestige in family as well as in society. If someone has own property, land and bank balance, then the reactions of family is very different. Most of the times, in Pakistani society elder transfer the property to her children. For this reason they faced several types of social and psychological issues. Participant 10 shared that "he had 3 Murabba of lands and he converted those lands in the name of his son before his death and he had faced a lot of problems later." Some participants were living their better lives on the pension. As female participant 16 shared "I am not burden on children. Because I am government job retired and have enough pension. So, I manage all the things own self and sometimes give some money to children's."

Only few participants believed that issues of old age also depend on social class and position. Participant 19 explained that "while living in home, my social class and position has no value. They always talk about is my age and health. At that time I am totally

dependent on family." Some of the participants believed that if they transferred each and everything in the children's name, he would have nothing to survive. Even he would not receive the respect; the bread was year another distant option.

According to participants, the old persons were the blessings of a society in a sense that if an old man came across face to face and asked them something, they would surely guide to the right way. Today's generation would not guide someone because remained busy in mobile phones [12].

## CONCLUSION

The current study is conducted to view the social perception of aging and different social, psychological and health perspective of older person's life. The study explores that people perceived aging through gray hair, seeing and hearing disabilities, postural change, elongation of ear and nose, shortened hunk loss of muscles strength. The finding shows that aged people percentage is increasing rapidly around the whole Pakistan. The older person in their life faces several types of social, psychological, physical and biological issues. One of the major issues faced by the old age people in their life is social isolation. The older persons are marginalized in social activities, decision-making, employment opportunities and making medical facilities. All this is due to their physical and psychological impairment. Majority of the old age people suffered from hypertension, heart diseases, diabetes due to isolation. Social isolation has become one of the major factors in old age that are responsible for all diseases. The study finding also concluded that there are many social, psychological issues faced by older persons in their later year of life. The older person's psychological health affected due to neglect from their family. The retirement and economic compulsions are also responsible for the psychological issues among old age persons. Isolation from life activities, the death of partner, economic compulsions, retirement and physical impairment these are factors, cause many socio-psychological issues among old age persons.

The older persons in their old age become a victim of neglect and discrimination in community. They are physically, socially and emotionally abused in society, mostly the abuser is the family member and relatives of the aged person. The aged persons behaved unfairly in old age mostly due to their age physical impairment and declining mental health. They are mostly discriminated economic and employment opportunities. The older persons also feel an economic compulsion, which affects their life, mostly the elder due to dependency on their children. Inflation in society and less job opportunities affected by all these factors. The older person's source of income is not enough to bear the life expenditure. They are even forced to search economic opportunities for their survival in their later life. The government and private sector have still failed to provide the sources of income to the elder due to impairment number in their population. There is no formal and informal social security system working in the country that may truly help the old age persons to live a healthy aging life.

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