

A Cross-Sectional Study to Assess the Emotional Problems and Coping Strategies among Senior Citizens of Rural Village

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Abstract: Senior citizens fear losing their independence more than they fear death. 75 percent of old age population experiences at least some stress, half of those experience moderate or high levels of stress during their lifetime. Senior citizens face three serious problems: poverty, disease and loneliness. This study focused on emotional problems and coping strategies among senior citizens in selected village of Gurgaon, Haryana. Data was collected using structured interview schedule. Findings revealed (54.54%) were females, (38.31%) were in the age group of 60-65 years, (85.71%) were married, (86.36%) were living in joint family, (55.19%) were having 5-7 members in a family, (53.24%) were having no formal education, (61.03%) were pensioner, (98.70%) had their own house and (84.41%) were vegetarian. Major emotional problems reported were keeping feelings to oneself (75.32%), no family support (66.88%), isolated in emotional stress situation (62.33%) and peer group understands more than family (59.74%). Major coping strategies reported were social support group (99.35%), spending time with family and friends (98.70%), being positive (96.75%) and self-blaming (91.55%).

Keywords: Emotional problem, coping strategy, senior citizens

1. Introduction

Ageing is a natural process. "Old age put more wrinkle in one's mind than on his face" Old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human beings, and thus the end of the human lifecycle.^[1] There is no concrete work schedule to follow, and they start feeling unwanted. When all the young members of the family are the busy in the discourse of life, old people lack the love and attention you need. All these factors contribute in emotional problems or stressing in old age.^[2] Emotional problem: It includes failure to adopt to situations leads to bitterness, inner withdrawal and depression may arise.^[3] A study to find out experiences of elderly regarding their health problems residing in homes of Kathmandu city showed the results that loneliness and decreased recent memory power were the psychological problems.^[4] Old age is associated with increases in physical and mental health problems.^[5-7] Along with these health conditions many elderly people have to face social problems like isolation, negligence, physical and psychological abuse which further may deteriorate their health conditions and they are allowed to remain depressed and alone.^[8]

The population aged 60+ in rural India is 73.3 million and in urban area is 30.6 million.^[9]

For a developing country like India, rapid growth in the number of older population creates issues that are hardly perceived yet; this must be addressed for developed emotional problems faced by the older population so that a holistic health care is established in the nation.

2. Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in a selected village of Gurgaon, Haryana, India. The study was conducted on 154 senior citizens who were available and willing to participate in the study. Participant with history of chronic

disease or any bed ridden conditions were excluded from the study. A brief overview of the nature and purpose of the study was given to the participants of the study and informed consent was obtained from them. Data was collected from the participants with the help of structured interview schedule having 2 sections. Section I comprised of questions to get the background information of the participants and Section II comprised of questions to assess the emotional problems and coping strategies.

3. Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

4. Baseline Characteristics

Demographic details of the sample were explored using the interview schedule and frequency, percentage were calculated as shown below in the table.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables N=154

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	60-65	59	38.31%
	65-70	45	29.22%
	70-75	22	14.28%
	75-80	10	6.49%
	Above 80	18	11.68%
Gender	Male	70	45.54%
	Female	84	54.54%
Marital status	Single	0	0%
	Married	132	85.71%
	Widowed	22	14.28%
	Divorced	0	0%
Religion	Hindu	154	100%
	Muslim	0	0%
	Sikh	0	0%
	Christian	0	0%

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	Another	0	0%
Type of family	Nuclear	18	11.68%
	Joint	133	86.36%
	Extended	3	1.94%
Number of member	2-4	16	10.38%
	5-7	85	55.19%
	Above 8	53	34.41%
Education background	No formal education	82	53.24%
	Primary education	51	33.11%
	Secondary education	15	9.74%
	Senior secondary education	4	2.59%
	Graduation	0	0%
Lifestyle/ Activities	Post graduation	2	1.29%
	Dependent	78	50.64%
	Independent	62	40.25%
Occupation	Partially dependent	14	9.09%
	Private	20	12.98%
	Pensioner	94	61.03%
Monthly income	Farmer	40	25.97%
	1000	36	23.37%
	1000-5000	92	59.74%
House type	Above 5000	26	16.88%
	Own	152	98.70%
Food habits	Rent	2	1.29%
	Vegetarian	130	84.41%
	Non vegetarian	7	4.54%
	Eggetarian	17	11.03%

Findings revealed that majority of senior citizens (54.54%) were females, (38.31%) were in the age group of 60-65 years, (85.71%) were married, (86.36%) were living in joint family, (55.19%) were having 5-7 members in a family, (53.24%) were having no formal education, (61.03%) were pensioner, (98.70%) had their own house and (84.41%) were vegetarian.

5. Emotional and Coping Strategies

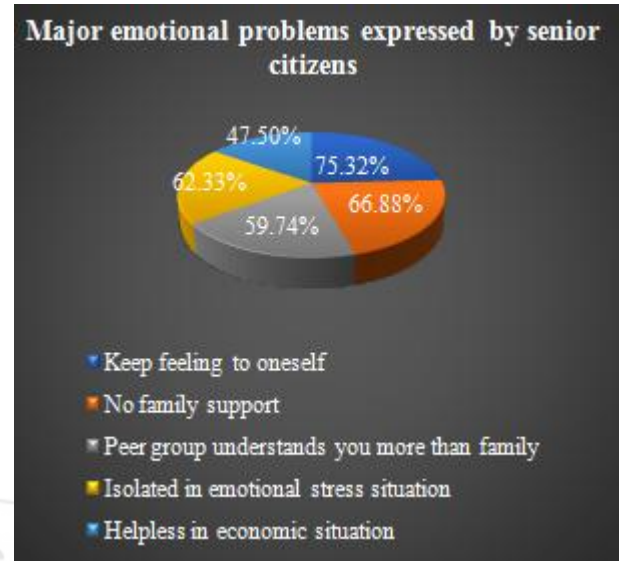


Figure 1: The emotional problems with more percentage distribution are Keeping feelings to oneself (75.32%), no family support (66.88%), Isolated in emotional stress situation (62.33%) and Peer group understands more than family (59.74%).

Table 2: Overall mean, SD, mean percentage of emotional problem scores of senior citizens
N=154

Area	Maximum Score	Emotional Problem Score		
		Mean	SD	Mean %
Assess emotional problem of senior citizens	20	5.63	0.70	28.15%

Mean, mean percentage and S.D to assess senior citizens of age above 60 years regarding Emotional problems showed (5.63±0.70) which was 28.15%. It revealed that senior citizens from the selected village of Gurgaon had reported less emotional problem.

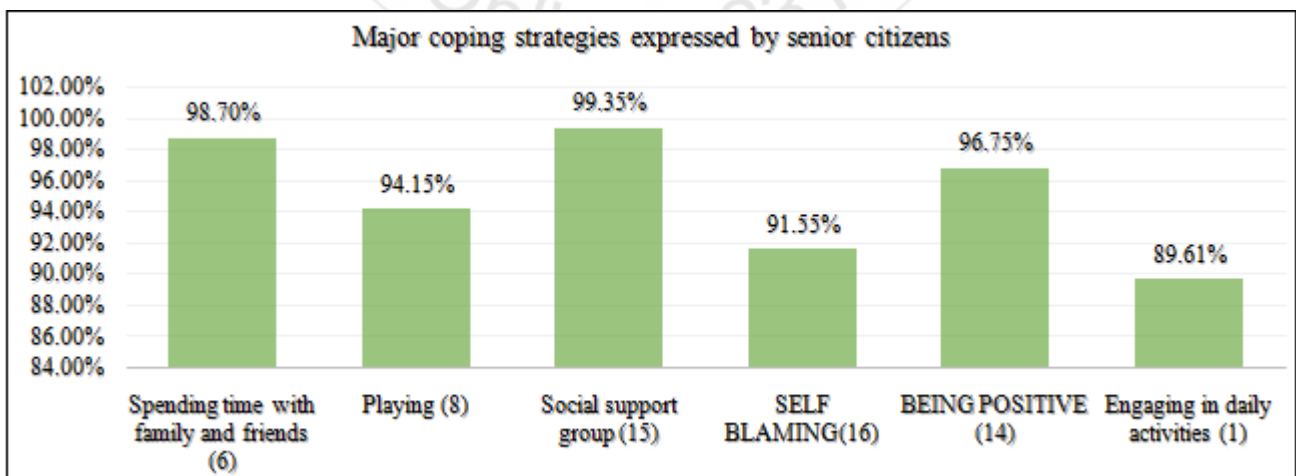


Figure 2: Major coping strategies expressed by senior citizens

Major coping strategies reported by selected samples were social support group (99.35%), Spending time with family and friends (98.70%), being positive (96.75%) and self-blaming (91.55%).

Table 3: Overall mean, SD, mean percentage of coping strategies score of senior citizens

N=154

Area	Maximum Score	Coping Strategies Score		
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Percentage
Assess coping strategies of senior citizens	20	15.67	1.41	78.35%

Mean, mean percentage and S.D to assess senior citizens regarding coping strategies was (15.67±1.41) which was 78.35%. It revealed that senior citizens use various coping strategies to deal with their emotional problems.

6. Discussion

The study showed that emotional problems score expressed by senior citizens was 28.15% and coping strategies score was 78.35%. This shows that less emotional problems were expressed and coping strategies were used by samples. Severe psychosocial problems were higher in institutional settings (29%) than home settings (6%) with source of suffering reported to be social isolation, resulting from difficulty in maintaining social contact because of disabilities and loss of spouse and friends.^[4] According to Sashmita Panigrahi^[10] the overall stress mean score (60.6±7.28) which is 60.6% of total score, shows the moderate stress of senior citizens and the overall coping strategies mean score (68.93±5.91) which is 68.93% of total score shows that there is moderate level of coping among senior citizens consistent with the current study.

The coping strategy spending time with family (98.7%) was mostly used by senior citizens which is supported by the study result which showed attachment was nearly significant emotional closeness to significant others which derives a sense of security appears to be important for loneliness.^[11]

The major emotional problem expressed in this study was loneliness or keeping feeling to oneself (75.32%) which is consistent with the result of study by Jorun Drageset^[11] which showed 56% experienced loneliness. This study result showed that majority of senior citizens (38.31%) were in the age group of 60-65 years which is consistent with another study which revealed that most of the respondents (54%) were between the age group of 60-70 years, 32% between 71-80 years and remaining (14%) above 80 years.^[12] This study showed that majority (54.54%) senior citizens were females which is similar to another study report showing samples predominantly women (n= 35, 85.4%), with ages ranged from 62 to 90 years (mean ± SD: 72.1 ± 6.3).^[13]

Author Valmira^[14] found that the major psychological problem reported by elderly was anxiety followed by loneliness (58.5%), isolation (55.3%), stress (52.1%), feeling of guilt (51.1%) and of affection and irritation (50%) whereas this study showed the major emotional problems as keeping feelings to oneself (75.32%), no family support (66.88%), isolated in emotional stress situation (62.33%) and Peer group understands more than family (59.74%). This study showed social support group (99.35%), Spending time with family and friends (98.70%), being positive (96.75%) and self-blaming (91.55%) as major coping strategies which

is consistent with results of study by Birekland and Natvig^[15] which indicated that old people that are living separately consider acceptability as one of their main coping strategies.

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