

# Coping Mechanism for Developing Psychosocial Well-being among the Elderly in Urban Locality

Swapna Ghosh

Regd No.: MIU/PhD/2022/ S098B

PhD. Scholar, Department of Nursing, Manipur International University (MIU)

**Abstract:** *The present study is undertaken to assess the psychosocial well-being and coping mechanisms of the elderly in selected urban areas of Howrah district, West Bengal. A non-experimental research approach with a descriptive survey design will be used to collect the relevant information. **Background:** Aging is a natural and continuous irreversible changing process. Being elderly is a big challenge to human life with respect to health as well as psychosocial needs. The present study is an attempt to fill the gap in knowledge about the existing health-related and psychosocial problems and coping mechanisms faced by the elderly population. In this stage, progressive generalized impairment of function occurs which resulting in loss of adaptive response to stress as well as psychosocial problems. Traditionally speaking, the Indian family system was always a safe and secure space for the elderly. Unfortunately, for the past 50 years, the transformation of the joint family system into nuclear units in India has been detrimental to the interests of the elderly. Thus, the absence of family care and community support has given rise to loneliness and coping problems among the elderly. **Objective:** 1) To assess the Psychosocial well-being experienced by the elderly living in urban communities in selected areas of West Bengal. 2) To find the coping strategies adopted by the elderly living in urban communities in selected areas of West Bengal. 3) To find the association between Psychosocial well-being and coping mechanisms within selected demographic variables.*

**Keywords:** Coping Mechanism, Psychosocial Well-being, Elderly, Urban Locality.

## 1. Introduction

Elderly or old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human beings. The boundary of old age cannot be defined exactly because it does not have the same meaning in all societies.

The World statistics elderly denotes that the population of the elderly 65 years is growing at a rapid rate compared to other classes of population below 65, due to an increase in life expectancy and a reduction in the number of children born in a given year. Good standard of living and medical advancement are the two determinants of the increasing elderly population in the developed world.

Indian's population of 1.31 billion is the second largest globally. The Government of India had adopted the 'National policy on older persons' in January 1999. The policy defines 'Senior citizen' or elderly as a person who is 60 years of age or above. The elderly population accounted for 7.4% of the total population in 2001, and it is projected to rise to 12.4% of the population by the year 2026. Judging by national standards.

West Bengal is no exception to the dynamics of population ageing in the country. There are 74,90,514 persons (51.4% males and 48.6% females) above 60 years of age, with 68 per cent residing in rural areas and 32 per cent residing in urban locales. The decadal growth rate of 60+ populations in West Bengal, projected by the Technical Group of Population Projections, National Commission on Populations, indicates that over the next few years, the state will undergo a huge demographic shift and while the total population is projected to rise by 26 per cent in the year 2026 as compared to the base year of 2001, population of 60+ age groups will rise by 170 per cent over the same period (Central Statistics 2011).

Under such circumstances, it is quite significant for the present author to study the implications of coping mechanisms and psychosocial problems among the elderly population residing in the urban areas of the state.

The needs and problems of the elderly vary significantly according to their age. the present literature review paper is a study to assess the coping mechanisms and psychosocial well-being among the elderly in selected urban localities. Socio-economic status, Health living status, and other such background characteristics. Various studies have been conducted to analyze the health and related issues associated with old age. but there are several areas that need

further exploration. Hence, the present study will focus on various sociodemographic profile of the elderly population and their association with different psychosocial problems.

It is common knowledge that old age is associated with various physical disabilities, which lead to dependency on others for daily activities. This dependency on others further creates coping and psychosocial problems. It needs to be mentioned that the negligence of family members is one of the most important factors for psychosocial problems among elderly persons. Along with that the elderly people are prone to psychosocial problems due to harassment, sickness, separation, exploitation, and living alone.

Hence, it is the need of the hour to understand the problems of elderly people in urban settings, and therefore, this paper aims to study the coping mechanisms and psychosocial well-being among the elderly in selected urban localities.

### Ageing process

The term ageing has gained lots of attention over the years as the population of elderly people keeps rising due to the above-mentioned factors. Ageing is defined to mean a periodic

change in human life, which means man and the conditions he is subjected to are constantly changing as time passes.

Ageing is a process that leads to a decline in health status and limits the activity of the old people. Despite this, old people remain curious to maintain their privacy with little or no external influence; they want to live an independent life and go around by themselves (Duner & Nordstrom, 2005, p. 440).

Our age and not our abilities often determine how others treat us and what we can or cannot do. Although this is true for all ages, not only for the elderly, the negative stereotypical reactions are barriers to many activities and adequate access to essential services. There are widespread stereotypes about the reduced ability of elderly people who tend to eliminate their work capabilities, education, vocational training, effective medical care, entertainment, and integrated life. So, because of age discrimination, these individuals encounter major obstacles in achieving their plans. Unfortunately, many older people embrace the age stereotypes and exclude themselves from varied activities. The prejudices that exist for older people usually lead to less favorable judgments about them, regardless of their abilities and characteristics. Besides the direct age discrimination, indirect discrimination exists when a condition or requirement applies to everyone, but the elderly are kept out of those options.

Old age, thus, can be viewed as an unavoidable, undesirable, problem-ridden phase of life that we are all compelled to live until our final exit from life itself. With an increasing number of older adults in old age homes and in our localities, it becomes all the more imperative to research elderly people with emotional problems, which the current review paper intends to do, as existing literature doesn't focus explicitly on this area.

## 2. Coping Mechanism

The coping definition is multi-dimensional depending on the situation at hand, the possibility to adapt, and the available resources. It could be a response to medical, biological, or psychosocial stressors regarding problem-solving and emotional adjustments.

On the other hand, Skinner et. al. suggest that the division between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping should no longer be used. Instead, these authors argue in favor of a hierarchical system of ways of acting which was constructed from the analysis of one hundred coping systems in which potential coping families were categorized (Chart 2)16 An attempt would be made by the author to establish the connection between problems of old age and coping mechanisms.

### Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being refers to positive mental health. Psychological well-being can increase with age, education, extraversion, and consciousness and decrease with neuroticism. Psychological well-being can reduce psychosocial problems among individuals irrespective of age. It needs to be mentioned here that the family is the one that can reduce the occurrence of psycho-social problems in elderly people and even their extinction. The close bond

inside the family can help and support people by showing them that they are a family.

There are many things that families can do to help the elderly reduce the chance of suffering from psychosocial problems. It is conducive to say that the family should not isolate seniors from various activities within the household.

A similar study was conducted on psychological problems and coping strategies of elderly persons. It was found that the majority 60% of them, had a moderate level of psychological problems, and 43% of the elderly persons had a fair level of coping strategies. There was a negative correlation found between psychological problems and coping strategies, respectively, by R. Nishanthi et al. (2017)

The present author feels that the intervention of the family can reduce psychosocial problems among the elderly and can enhance coping skills to a greater extent.

The results suggest that paramedics recognize there is a wide array of psychosocial issues affecting older patients. They also recognize that these issues are complex and often beyond what they can achieve within the confines of their role; however, they felt that education and greater resources are needed to address the problem.

The study indicated that elders themselves need to take responsibility to cope with their psychosocial challenges. Therefore, improving elders' social interactions, social activities, and their self-reliance is needed.

Quality of life (QOL) among the elderly reflects the health status and well-being of this group of population. Furthermore, it is considered an important area of concern all over the world. There is a need to identify the physical and psychosocial problems that are being faced by the elderly people in rural areas as well as the strategies for improving the elderly's quality of life. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to assess physical and psychosocial health problems among elderly people in the rural area and their effects on their quality of life.

## 3. Discussion

The elderly people are challenged by the outcome of the ageing process, but to keep moving with life, coping strategies become an essential way out. Coping is subdivided into two groups according to the function it performs: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping.

The population around the world is growing older at a high rate, with increasing life expectancy. The challenge ahead for health care in the coming years is to ensure the quality of life for a large group of the elderly population. However, to address the health-care needs of this aging and heterogeneous population, reliable information about their health problems from different social settings is still lacking in India.

The present review paper intends to focus on coping mechanisms and developing psychosocial health among the elderly. Moreover, it is good for elders, with the support and encouragement of their family, to find activities that give

them satisfaction and pleasure, which can include recreational activities, excursions, meetings, training activities as well as employment in a voluntary or non-voluntary level. Even if the person has difficulty in identifying how to be socialized or to be active, the family can give him the appropriate stimuli to adjust himself to everyday life in the best possible way, in order to remain independent and active.

#### 4. Conclusion

The existing literature reveals that none of the senior citizens were using good coping strategies. About 76% (34) of senior citizens have average and about 24% (11) senior citizens have poor coping strategies. The findings of the present study try to show that there is a significant association between marital status, sex, and emotional problems.

The majority of the elderly people felt neglected by their family members. There is thus an urgent need for family support, respect, and care to combat the Psychosocial problems faced by the elderly population.

The study would highlight that elderly people have definite Psychosocial problems. They experience anxiety, depression, and loneliness, and have low self-esteem, and their well-being is also low. Existing studies have concluded that 97% of elderly people suffer from social isolation, whereas 71% of elderly people have poor coping strategies.

The present author would try to argue that elders themselves need to take responsibility to cope with their psychosocial challenges. Therefore, improving elders' social interactions, social activities, and self-reliance is needed. Furthermore, they do need to engage themselves in different income-generating activities, to divert their attention from stressful situations, and take continuous physical exercises to strengthen their muscles and improve physical fitness. On the other hand, by developing acceptance, avoidance, adaptation, emotional, and other coping mechanisms, they would be able to resist psycho-social challenges. Additionally, elders are advised to reconcile conflicts with their family or other community members and use different opportunities to control troubles with them.

It was concluded in one study that 66% of old age people had probable depression, 52% had probable dementia, 49% had mild anxiety, 97% were at risk of social isolation, and 71% of old age people had poor coping strategies. The psychological problems and coping strategies were not significant with demographic variables at a 0.05 level of significance. Nevertheless, elderly people need to take responsibility for their Psychosocial challenges.

The researchers have developed therapies such as exercise, gardening, talking to others, spirituality, cooking, and watching TV, which they believe would benefit the elderly. Along with that, awareness among the elderly population should be created for regular medical check-ups to ensure the prevention and early detection of chronic diseases. There is a need to have geriatric wards having specialized professionals, with psychiatric and medical social workers, along with subsidized health care services.

Awareness about nutrition and health-related issues of the elderly is of great importance—programs focusing on elderly women and the poor need to be formulated and implemented. There is a need for an appropriate insurance scheme to enable the elderly to meet their medical expenses. Health problems of the elderly should be tackled with psycho-social intervention. Healthy traditions and values of Indian culture should be protected and promoted by developing good intra-familial and social relationships.

#### Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all professors, all assistant professors, and all faculty of the PhD Program at Manipur International University for their valuable suggestions, words of encouragement and implementation, and timely help for a successful opinion.

#### Conflict of interest- None

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