Adjustment Patterns in Old Age: A Sociological Study of Older People in Srinagar District of Kashmir Valley

By

Prof (Dr) Aneesa Shafi
Department of Sociology
University of Kashmir, Srinagar (J&K) India

&

Tarif Hamid Akhoon
Research Scholar
Department of Sociology
University of Kashmir, Srinagar (J&K) India

Abstract
During the ageing the Adjustment for older age people involves both cognitive and behavioral response by which a older people strive to cope and overcome with their inner needs, anxieties tensions, and conflicts and tries to seek harmony between such inner demands that are imposed upon him by the external world in which older people live and if such conflicts are resolved to satisfy the older people’s needs within the norms approved by the society the older people are considered to be adjusted. In Kashmiri society traditional norms and values laid emphasis on giving respect and providing care for older but due to urbanization and generation gap, older people are being ignored and face problems that are difficult to adjust. The emergence of nuclear families and breakdown of Joint family setup has posed many challenges to older age people in nuclear family where young people find no time them and they are left alone and isolated where the young find no time to look after the old. Within such household the status and position of older are at stake and matter of concern. The adjustment in modern society for older people within families becomes difficult because they are traditional in nature. Thus there is a contradiction in ways of thinking between older people and their younger. The present study aims to explore and investigate the adjustment patterns of older and their emerging problems. For this purpose an interview schedule and survey method along with observation technique was undertaken to collect data. This study also explores the changes in families due to modern ways of life style which are attributed to growing individualism, materialistic thinking of young people, and neglect of older people by their children in Srinagar District.

Key Words: older people, adjustment, Srinagar city

1. Introduction
Growing old during the process of ageing regardless of chronological age, is the last stage in life-span of human beings. During the sixties People are usually referred to as older or Aged. In Indian subcontinent however, all those persons who are of age group of sixty years or above are considered among the old aged. The Ageing is a stage of life and biological process in nature. Every living organism that is born gets aged as time passes decays and perishes.1
An increase in the proportion of older age population may indicate an improvement in the quality of life span due to better conditions and circumstances. Taking this situation into consideration the 21st century may be regarded as an era of population ageing.2 when individuals start living longer the quality of their
longer life becomes significant and a central core issue for both their personal life and social wellbeing.\(^3\) It is well known fact considered and accepted that as individuals become older, his or her experiences that the individual has acquired during the course of life time and also ways in adapting and dealing with the environmental conditions, economic and social resources and relationships and support systems can have profound impact on both gender longevity and well being.\(^4\) Simultaneously as individuals enter into older age they are confronted by and challenged with physical, mental, and social changes over time.\(^5\) Ageing of Population is the most rapidly emerging as a significant demographic phenomenon in the today world. The population of older age people has increased significantly over the decades, on the other hand, the societal based support system for older people has weakened and currently it is showing a decreasing trend. During 1950s, the population of older people was 60 years and it was above the proportion of 205 million which had increased to 606 million in year 2000. It has been estimated that by 2050, the proportion of older age population will be 60 years and will grow and is further projected to make a steep rise to 21.1 percent, and will be two billion in number. If we look at Asian scenario there has been a largest proportion of world’s elderly and is nearly 53 per cent, which is followed by Europe having 25 percent of older population. This population pressure of increasing of elderly people will nearly be intensified in coming next 50 years. The estimation is that the population of older people will be 82 percent in 2050, in the world which will be in developing countries within of Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean while there will be only 16 per cent of older people that will reside in the developed world of European and North American countries. Thus the ageing of population rapidly emerging as the worldwide concern and mostly problem of developing countries.\(^6\)

Family life in developing countries acts as symbol of solidarity, love and affection for older people within household’s structure and settings. The younger people in traditional times used to provide respect and honor to elderly people be in family, community and society but now a day’s situation is far from being different in its complete context. Due to growing technological innovations, rapid urbanization and emerging the growth of individualism and materialistic attitude the there exists a clash between traditional and modern way of life between older and younger generations. Older people within families feel lonely and isolated because their children although staying within the same house do not bother to interact and take proper care of the older people as they are busy with their life which is riddled with economic struggle and strive, thus older people find themselves being isolated and there is a great difficulty in their adjustment patterns of life. Adjustment within family settings is the cornerstone of all human societies and cultures. The place within the family in which an older person finds and expects the encouragement, comfort and security and help. Adjustment in the old age is of utmost importance thus according to Sarason adjustment implies the gaining mastery over one’s environmental conditions and staying and being at peace with oneself which means the ability of an individual to satisfy the demands of his surroundings as well as his needs and aspirations, a normal and healthy balance between what an individual wants and what society demands from him.\(^7\) The adjustment pattern of older individuals involves two conditions usually to meet the demands within the environment and also perceiving and experiencing a sense of overall well-being according to his
environmental conditions. Older people often feel uncomfortable and often may find it difficult to adjust themselves with the modern generational values due to generation gap that exists between them. They have their own mental attitudinal setup and Patterns governing themselves. The older people within familial household setup are often prone to oppose the modern values and trends and lifestyle of their children and younger generations due to lack of adjustment. Old people to be well adjusted during old age must be in a condition being able to satisfy and fulfill their personal needs and requirements and live up to the expectations of others within the familial settings. The attitudes of their grown up children towards their older age parents and frequent associations with them may contribute to their good personal and social adjustment within family. An unwanted and attitude that is resistant of children towards their older parents and to adjustment to changes in older age brings a serious impediment to successful adjustment during old age. Older age people need serious attention and urgent attention. The older people don’t need ones pity, but understanding of love and care from their children. It is the duty of their immediate family members and younger generation to see that their parents do not feel or live in isolation, pain and misery. Older persons are, therefore, require of vital support to maintain their overall quality of life. Older individuals in their life during the period of ageing go through social as well as psychological adjustment during older age, in terms of determining correlation of good adjustment that usually began with the earliest period of modern gerontology. While In Western societies, the problem of older age or old age problems is a greater social issue and a matter of concern which poses challenge to their socio economic setup. In terms of Indian context the adjustment patterns of older age people within family, community and societies also becoming a matter of concern in Indian society as well as in Kashmir social life and settings. The well being and better adjustment status to the older people will tend to be one of the important problems facing both developed and developing countries in coming future during the current century. This will be due to considering the outcomes and the trends of modernization in Indian society which is rapidly developing country due to massive industrialization and urbanization and decline in fertility and mortality patterns.

2. Review of Literature

Irene, M. Hulicka. (1957) has conducted an empirical study in the in the field of Psychology and Sociology of Aging. Which is purely a quantitative analysis in nature, and which clearly states and analyzes demography, intellectual functioning, perceptual functioning, memory, problem-solving and creativity, life satisfaction and adjustment to older age people during their ageing period and also work and retirement. The author in this book discusses in detail that how the Process of ageing and behavior of older people are having connection together. According to some of the surveys undertaken, which show that the impact of environment on older people. The author in this study further states that an influence of an improved physical and social environment appears not only in the increased satisfaction of older residents with their living situation but also in having and developing more favorable attitudes about themselves and towards others, in different social patterns of life, and thus further show the signs of improved physical and cognitive health.
Ramamurti (1968) conducted a study on some of the relational Factors which are associated to Adjustment of older males in urban set up. The author further reveals in this study the impact of socio economic status on the adjustment of older individuals. It reveals that the older people belonging to higher sections of society or higher income groups people better adjusted within familial settings than the older people who belong to lower socio economic income groups.\(^\text{11}\)

Cumming & Henry.\(^{(}1961\)) \(^{\text{11}}\) in their study conducted on older people in various households and in different familial settings and measure the adjustment patterns through morale. The authors have further showed that the positive association of social interaction with adjustment diminishes in the later years of life.\(^{\text{12}}\)

Richard et al. (1962) In their study which they conducted on older retired urban men while measuring adjustment patterns within familial setup during aging and retirement through the life satisfaction and wellbeing has established that passivity, inactivity and low interaction which may be perfectly consistent with satisfactory psychological adjustment.\(^{\text{13}}\)

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Universe of the study

The sample for the purpose of this study was based on 60 respondents and using an intensive approach through case study and interview schedule, the study has been carried out in urban Srinagar district of Kashmir valley and aimed to trace the problems of adjustment of older people within families and for enhancing objectives of the research both open ended and closed end interview schedule were framed along with participant observation method.

4.2. Sampling Plan of the study

The sampling plan of the present study is based on the sample of 60 respondents selected at random basis from Srinagar district of Kashmir valley. Survey and case study method was utilized to collect data from the field.

4.3. Objectives of the study

1. To find out the perceived support and adjustment status among the aged persons in the study area
2. To identify problems of older people due to adjustment in the study area

5. Findings of the Study

The findings in this study Reveals that majority, older people undertaken in this study belonged to the age group of 55-80 who were living with their children within same households but were being neglected and faced problem of adjustment which was most common in older females more than in older males. Some of the elderly women and men were in teaching profession before the age of retirement and had problems of adjustment with their grandchildren because they were given very less attention by them. The older people taken under study belonged mostly to middle and some to upper socio economic strata of society.
problems of adjustment were more prevalent among the colder people who belonged to middle sections of society. They were confronted with mental and physical problems due to lack of attention by their children and not given proper care and attention. Most of them revealed that they were well during the time when they used to work but after retirement and becoming older their physical and mental capabilities have declined now. Most of the elderly couples said they go outside their homes to have a small walks in order to ease their tensions and stress level but after all they have to visit back home and it is again a sort of prison for them. They even revealed that they have modern gadgets at their home but since they can’t make use of them they feel more alone there needs to be someone around who would interact with us mostly our children but interacting with them is often a futile exercise as they are busy with their day to day schedule. Some elderly women revealed that their daughter in law does not even behave with them properly so they have to do most of their tasks themselves like washing of clothes and getting their clothes ironed by themselves. Some older women even said that they were being treated as unwanted creatures and burden by their children. They didn’t speak with us in a polite manner because they ware themselves living a life which is riddled with day to day tensions and anxieties and very busy work schedule which has made them tense.

The elderly males said our children are so busy with earning money that they can’t see the plight of their older age parents. We are living a life of loneliness within our own households no matter having all sorts of comforts and modern gadgets by what we crave the most is the love, care and attention from our children. They are around us but we are far away from us. The elderly women when asked about their grandchildren revealed that their grandchildren are also very busy with their studies and if they have an empty time they spent it on using their mobile phones and laptops even when they are near and close to us there is very small interaction between them and us. The older people said that they read news paper during morning times and watched T.V as well but that does not suffice us. Some of the elderly where living alone with their children who had loss their spouse. There condition was even more miserable as they sympathetically revealed there pain and agony of loss of lifelong companion whom they were emotionally attached with. They said it was a worse kind of feeling and suffering. Older age people were mostly religious in their nature particularly older males who attended mosques and regarding older women they were not that religious they said they offer prayer some times as they have poor health condition as compared to their husbands. They said they offer prayers which provide them with peace of mind. Most of the elderly people spend their leisure time sitting in garden and also watching T.V and sometimes doing work in garden but the revealed that they had poor interactions with their children grand children and even their daughter in laws. Most of their work was done by the maid servant hired by their children. Even they were given food by the servants who managed the household’s chores. Most of the older age people said that they received less support from their male children but regarding their own daughters it was to some extent satisfactory but not so well. Elderly people also revealed that their decisions were not given importance regarding family matters because they were treated as mentally incapable and of traditional bent of mind. The elderly people said that there is often confrontation between them and their children for their ideological bent of mind. Even their grand children
don’t listen to them and treat them as being traditional and having outdated and outmoded belief about current modern society. So their Grandchildren had very less interaction with them because of conflicting values.

Pertaining to women folk majority of them managed the house hold chores by themselves sometimes. Some of the older people respondents sometimes took up work like gardening if their health condition permitted, because due to restricted mobility they could not move out very often. Some older people engaged themselves by talking and interacting with their relatives’ sometimes if time permitted but they mostly spend time sleeping and resting inside and thinking. It was further found by the researcher while interacting with older people that majority of elderly people were suffering from memory problems like forgetfulness and not remembering things properly because of this memory they were being neglected by family members because they found it irritating in nature. Older people also revealed about their ill health condition and complained about knee and joint pains they thought that because of their restricted mobility they were like a burden for their children. Some even said their children even don’t have time to fix an appointment for doctor because of them having time constraint and because not able to walk properly. Older people also had a problem of failing in their eye sight, some of the older males were suffering from high blood pressure and their children neglected them and argued with them some times on familial and financial matters which made their problem of blood pressure more aggravating.

Some of them were facing the major problem chronic fatigue which was more prominent for women folk because they were less mobile and took foods that were not feasible for them like consuming more rice and oily foods. The older people revealed that they often craved for fruits, and drinking milk but feared to ask their children and even rarely consumed milk products. The study also revealed that older people looked after themselves and by their spouses by during the time of illness and their children sometimes took interest in them but very rarely. For Some older people perception about the old age was a time period of decreased physical, cogitative capacities. Other respondents felt negative attitude regarding old age which they perceived old age as a time period of utmost dependency on their children, loneliness as a major problem and concern and financial insecurity as issue for them. Their children did not treat them well in terms of asking money or buying medicines for them. The older people did not bother to enter the rooms of their children because they felt that children will be angry with them. The older people wanted to taste new foods and dishes but they revealed that they had to live and eat according to the choices and conditions of their children and had no say in family matters and decision making process. Some of the elderly men revealed about their spouse about having sleep disorders, fear, anxiety and restlessness during late night hours and at that time they felt very helpless not even bothered to take a help or call their children. They were living a life of lack of adjustment patterns confronting them. The lack of rest made them weak disturbed which resulted in experienced loss of their appetite. Some of the older people had better financial condition and were economically well of but were not able to take care of themselves with the money they had because of restricted mobility and poor ill health.
6. Conclusion

The conditions which older people face in families and societies and issues, problems, sufferings and miseries confronting older age people has recently emerged as a social concern in Asia and worldwide. The issues and problems of older have also emerged as a foremost social problem in Indian subcontinent in general as well as in Kashmiri society in particular. The problem of adjustment of ageing people within familial setup in developing countries in the world is a problem that needs to be addressed and taken into account. The developing countries are currently witnessing the rapidly increasing the proportion of older age people. The unprecedented growth of Urban and, modernized ways of live and acting and thinking and also the process of globalization has led to transformations and alternations in social and economic structure which has led to the eradication of social and cultural norms and values within families and societies. The plight of older age people and their adjustment problems are being neglected.

The weakening of social relationships among between older and younger generations within the joint and nuclear family setup changing economic and social settings. The young people and their respect, wisdom traditional sense of obligation towards the older people are having a setback and are being eradicated. The younger people are adopting modern ways of lifestyle and becoming more materialistic and neglecting their older parents in their homes. The young people and older people are caught between the decline in the traditional ways norms and values on one hand and the absence of an adequate economic and social security system on the other and are tremendously finding it difficult to adjust to new ways of modern life within the family and society. In context and view of this study was undertaken to explore and highlight the adjustment problem faced by the orderly people within family settings in Srinagar district.

7. References


