

## OLD AGE: A TIME TO RELISH OR REPENT

Dr.J.Raja Meenakshi

*Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvavur*

### **Abstract**

*Ageing is a process which starts at mother's womb and ends at grave yard. Mahadevan (1986) states that traditionally old age begins at 60 years in India. 60 years have been adopted by the census of India for the purposes of classifying a person as old. This age coincides with the age of retirement in India. Self image of a person revolves around the work one does. Work is central to the lives of most people and it is the source of prestige and respectability for the individual. Retirement socially implies the onset of old age. At the final phase of occupational life, the society expects a man / woman to take rest after a long period of service. Loss of job result in decreased psychological well being, loss of self esteem and self worth. After retirement from the institution the retired aged receive pension and other benefits. Retirement would bring many solid changes in the physical and psychological health of the aged and it may lead to stress, anxiety, and depression and could bring changes in the level of life satisfaction of the retired aged people. This study makes an attempt to understand the psychosocial life of retired people.*

**Key words:** *Aged, Retirement, Psychosocial life.*

The beginning of old age cannot be universally defined as it varies according to the culture and context. United Nations has agreed that 60+ years may be usually denoted as old age, and this is the first attempt at an international definition of old age. World Health Organization recognized that the developing world often defines old age, not by years, but by new roles, loss of previous roles, or inability to make active contribution to society. In many developed nations, most people in their 60s and early 70s are still fit, active, and able to care for themselves and only after 75, they get into serious mental and physical problems. At the same time, it is universally accepted that ageing is a process which starts at mother's womb and ends at grave yard. Being old is the last phase of human life cycle and it is a multidimensional process occurring as a post maturational change. Ageing is the gradual biological impairment of normal function, probably as a result of changes made to cells and structural components. These changes would consequently have a direct impact on the functional ability of organs, biological systems and ultimately the organism as a whole (Charmi S. Mehta & Vimal R. Joshi, 2012). The term aged has undergone change over the passage of time. Chinese scholars divided human life into seven phases and according to them old age were beyond 60 years. In western countries, 65 years is considered as old age. Mahadevan (1986) states that traditionally old age begins at 60 years in India. 60 years has been adopted by the census of India for the purposes of classifying a person as old. This age coincides with the age of retirement in India.

In today's industrial world, retirement has become mandatory. Self image of a person revolves around the work one does. Loss of job result in decreased psychological well being, loss of self esteem and self worth. In Indian middle class families, Retirement is considered as luxury where many are not able to afford. Many retired people feel that their responsibilities like children education, marriage are not completed at the time of the retirement. Retirement involves a loss of valued role and when the role is given up, the significance and the respect of the person diminishes. Due to this, many people face retirement with dismay and start to face hardships physically and psychologically after retirement. In India, the retirement is mostly mandatory for most jobs. The age of retirement has been changing over time in India. The Government has the authority to give work extension to any employee if his/her service is highly required. The age of retirement varies from state to state where in Tamil Nadu the age of retirement for Government employees is 58 years old, in Kerala it is 56 years and in Punjab, it is 60 years. In a study of pre- retirement and post retirement adjustment among urban aged, Ramamurti, P.V (1978) found that the pre- retirement period led to higher stress and consequently to maladjustment. A functional index was suggested by Ramamurti, P.V (1989f) where the functional capacity of an individual has to be considered instead of mandatory retirement. Since life expectancy at birth is increasing due to medical advancement, there is a need for an upward revision of the retirement age in India. Ramamurti, P.V (1992) made a strong recommendation for a higher retirement age and it was made out in the Draft policy for the elderly in India.

Due to changing work patterns, Retirement has become an expected part of life like completing academic education, getting married, having a family and working. The concept of Retirement developed in the twentieth century along with industrialization. The institutionalization of retirement had been done by various social legislations across various nations. Retirement is also seen as one of the ways to remove the older workers and to replace them with younger employees.

#### **Problems faced by retired aged**

Retired people find it hard to be workless immediately from the date of retirement and the issues they face following the retirement are loss of headship, role-loss mainly on account of loss of control over property and sources of income, decline in the status and power in the family and loss of decision making role. According to Swami Rama (1980), "the ultimate potential of the human being is a state in which peace, harmony, wholeness and balance exist on all levels". He quotes that "It is important for people to become aware of the fact that staying healthy is not merely matter of good diet, taking vitamins or even doing proper physical exercise. More crucial than any of these factors is keeping a healthy state of mind". Some of the prominent problems faced by retired aged people are Physical

and psychological complaints, Abuse in the family, Death of spouse, Income maintenance, Medical and health, Adjustment to changing roles and status, Proper use of leisure time and Empty nest syndrome.

Psychosocial refers to the psychological and sociological factors that affects the retired aged people. Psychosocial profile is the core concept where this study would analyze how the variables like stress, Geriatric Depression and Life satisfaction influence the psycho social life of retired aged people.

#### **Review of Literature:**

**Dhillon (1992).** “Psycho social aspects of ageing in India”

The aim is to study the impact of retirement on the life of the retired people. The study has stated that sudden retirement does not have an adverse impact on healthy persons who have seen working for generations as it results in loss of role, status, power, opportunities for interactions and loss of an occupational identity and in turn it leads to low morale, decreased level of satisfaction, depression and feeling of loneliness and helplessness. Thus the problems associated with ageing are numerous. Broadly speaking the main problem of the aged in our country is related to socio psychological economic and health problems.

**Patil, B. Prema. (2000).** “Psycho social Problems of the Retired”

The aim of this study to find the psycho social problems faced by the retired aged. This study consists of the sample of 510 elderly of 60 + age who are the residents of Dharwad and Belgaum cities of Karnataka. Questionnaire was used to collect data and the snow ball sampling method was followed. This study observed that people, who are just retired, experience severe problems. There is a sudden change occurring at this stage with far reaching consequences. Health, socio economic status, leisure time utilization, attitude, life satisfaction and psychological distress were some of the factors studied. Age was found to be significantly related to psychological distress and attitude. Leisure time utilization and social security were related. A positive relationship was found between perception, income and social relationship. The study revealed that older persons with low income had higher incidence of depression.

#### **Materials and methods:**

##### **Objective:**

- To understand the socio demographic status of the respondents.
- To study the level of stress, geriatric depression and life satisfaction of the respondents.

##### **Hypotheses:**

- There is a significant association between the age and level of stress of the respondents.

- There is a significant association between the income and the level of geriatric depression of the respondents.
- There is a significant association between the age and level of life satisfaction of the respondents.

**Research Design:**

The study describes the socio demographic data of the respondents and measures the level of stress, geriatric depression and life satisfaction. Descriptive design was adopted for this study and the retired aged above the age of 60 years are taken for this study.

**Universe and Sampling:**

The Universe of the present study consists of 1934 retired aged people who are 60 years old and above and the members of 5 registered retired employees association in Madurai District. The researcher adopted two phase sampling technique proposed by Kristopher Jennings (2009). In the first phase, the researcher used simple random sampling method to select 5 associations out of 36 registered retired people associations. In the second phase, stratified disproportionate sampling method was adopted. The stratum varies in each association, so the researcher selected 64 respondents from each stratum irrespective of the number of samples by adopting stratified disproportionate sampling method on the basis of the table given by Krejice and Morgan (1970) for determining sample size from a given population

**Tools of Data Collection**

Self prepared interview schedule was used to collect the socio demographic data and the stress scale developed by Dr.Thomas Holmes (1981) was used to study the level of stress, scale developed by Brink T. L (1983) was administered to assess the level of depression and the life satisfaction index prepared by Havinghurst (1971) was used to find out the level of life satisfaction among the aged people.

**Findings of the study:**

1. Nearly one third of the respondents (38.1 per cent) belong to the age between 61-65 years, more than one fourth of the respondents (26.3 per cent) are 66-70 years and 19.1 per cent of the respondents are in the category of 71-75 years.
2. Nearly half of the respondent's (47.2 per cent) overall monthly income is between Rs. 10001 - 20000 and one third (35.9 per cent) of the respondents earn between Rs. 20001- 30000.
3. More than half of the respondents are (61.9 per cent) are male.
4. Majority of the respondents (71.6 per cent) have low level of stress.
5. Majority of the respondents (62.8 per cent) have low level of Geriatric Depression.
6. Majority of the respondents (63.1 per cent) have medium level of life satisfaction

**Table 1: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of the level of stress**

S. No	Particulars	No. of Respondents (n= 320)	Per Centage
1.	Stress		
	Low	229	71.6
	Medium	81	25.3
	High	10	3.1

Regarding the level of stress, majority of the respondents (71.6 per cent) have low level of stress, and one fourth (25.3) of the respondents have medium level of stress and 3.1 per cent of respondents have high level of stress.

**Table 2: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of the level of Geriatric Depression**

S. No	Particulars	No. of Respondents (n= 320)	Per centage
1.	Geriatric Depression		
	Low	201	62.8
	Medium	90	28.1
	High	29	9.1

In relating to Geriatric Depression, majority of the respondents have (62.8 per cent) have low level of Geriatric Depression, 28.1 per cent of the respondents have medium level of Geriatric Depression and 9.1 per cent of the respondents have high level of Geriatric Depression.

**Table 3: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of the level of Life Satisfaction**

S. No	Particulars	No. of Respondents (n= 320)	Per centage
1.	Life satisfaction		
	Low	24	7.5
	Medium	202	63.1
	High	94	29.4

Regarding the life satisfaction, majority of the respondents have (63.1 per cent) medium level of life satisfaction, 29.4 per cent of the respondents have high level of satisfaction and 7.5 per cent of the respondents have low level of life satisfaction.

**Table 4: Association between age and level of stress of the respondents**

S. No	Variable	Correlation value	Statistical Inference
1.	Age	.171	P < 0.01 Significant

This table shows the correlation between two the variables namely age and stress. It has been observed that Pearson's correlation value is positive and significant ( $r = .171 <$

0.01) which clearly indicates that when age increases, level of stress also increases. This statement is true at 0.01 level of significance and there exist a significant relationship between the age and stress of the respondents.

**Table 5: Association between monthly income and level of geriatric depression**

S. No	Variable	Correlation value	Statistical Inference
1.	Overall monthly income	.077	P < 0.01 Significant

The above table shows the correlation between the two variables of overall monthly income and geriatric depression. It has been observed that Pearson's correlation value is positive and significant ( $r = .077 < 0.01$ ) which clearly indicates that when overall monthly income increases, level of geriatric depression decreases. This statement is true at 0.01 level of significance and there exist a significant relationship between the overall monthly income and geriatric depression of the respondents.

**Table 5: Association between age and level of life satisfaction**

S. No	Variable	Correlation value	Statistical Inference
1.	Age	.112	P < 0.05 Significant

In the correlation between the two variables of age and life satisfaction, it has been observed that Pearson's correlation value is positive and significant ( $r = .112 < 0.05$ ) which clearly indicates that when age increases, level of life satisfaction also increases. This statement is true at 0.05 level of significance and there exist a significant relationship between the age and life satisfaction of the respondents.

#### **Social Work Intervention:**

Social workers could identify the psychosocial problems and the reasons for the problems and by applying the case work method, the social workers could assist the retired aged to get rid of the issues by suggesting alternate ways.

The group of retired aged with severe problems could be helped with group work techniques like group psychotherapy, training groups and psycho drama with the assistance of psychologist and psychiatrist.

Community based interventions could be organized to sensitize the family members, care givers and young generation about the psychosocial problems of the retired aged people.

Group work could be provided to retired aged people with physical problems and psychological problems which would make them to accept it and live with it.

**Suggestions:**

Aged people should have the right to participate in productive employment. They should be provided with enough opportunities to contribute for the social and economic development of the community.

Government should review the National Policy for older persons periodically and special attention should be given to retired aged people.

Government has to reconsider their retirement policies keeping in mind the demographic transition.

Enough opportunities should be created for the retired aged where they could contribute to the family and society.

The members of the family should be made aware of the physical and psychological problems of the retired aged people where the family members should have an empathetic attitude towards the aged.

**References**

- Charmi, S. Mehta., &Vimal, R. Joshi. (2012). Anti ageing drugs in Ayurveda. *International Journal of Green and Herbal Chemistry*, 54 (1), 57-59.
- Dhillon, P. K. (1992). *Psycho-social Aspects of Aging in India*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Mahadevan, K. (1986). A System of policy for Welfare of the Elderly Citizens. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, XLVI (4), 232-238.
- Patil, B. Prema. (2000). Active aging, Psychosocial Problems of the Retired. *Social Welfare*, 47 (7), 13-17
- Ramamurthy, P. V. (1978). *The sixth decade and After*. Tirupati: S. V. University
- Ramamurti P. V. (1989f). Should we Retire People at 58? The Relevance of Chronological Age in Relation to Productivity, *Managerial Psychology*, 1,17-23.
- Ramamurti P. V. (1992). *National Policy for the Elderly - A Draft Proposal*. Submitted to the Ministry of Social Welfare on behalf of the Indian Federation on Aging, Bombay.