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Life Satisfaction among Elderly People Living in Old-Age-Home: A Study in Meerut

**Mrs Ayushi Gupta, Research Scholar (Psychology)
Centre for Psychology and Human Behaviour,
Shobhit Institute of Engineering and Technology
Deemed - to - be university**

**Dr. Poonam Devdutt, Prof. and Director
Centre for Psychology and Human Behavior,
Shobhit Institute of Engineering and Technology
Deemed - to - be University**

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the gender difference in life satisfaction and consisting areas of those living old-age-homes. 150 men and 150 women living in various old-age-homes situated in Meerut city were recruited for this study. Participants were examined life satisfaction scale developed and standardized by Alam & Dr. Ramji Srivastava. By calculating the mean values and t-test value, the difference between male and female significance was estimated with regard to life satisfaction. Results of this study showed that men have significantly greater life satisfaction than women. Health satisfaction, personal satisfaction and social satisfaction are the consisting aspects of life satisfaction, on which men reported greater level, whereas economic, job and marital satisfaction are the aspects of life satisfaction, on which men and women report no significant difference.

Keywords: Life Satisfaction, Health Satisfaction, personal satisfaction, social satisfaction, economic, job satisfaction, marital satisfaction, Gender.

INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction is an important concept in older adults because it gives us a holistic view of the individual's ability to adapt and adjust. The level of satisfaction of the elderly affects not only their psychological adaptation but also their physical, emotional and social well-being. Significant changes in the socio-cultural milieu along with increasing numbers are responsible for the recent emphasis on studies related to the elderly in India. Although the rising numbers are attributed to the demographic transition, the declining status of the elderly population is the result of the rapid erosion of the traditional family system as well as the substantial increase in the migration of adult children out of the home. In a changing environment, older men and women face various challenges. Despite this gendered picture, most studies reviewed in a recent meta-analysis reported only small gender differences in


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psychological well-being (Pinquart and Sorensen, 2001). While studies such as Gold et al. (2002); Murtagh and Hubert (2004) found gender differences in levels of life satisfaction, which might be expected because women experience more health problems than men, are more vulnerable to functional disability, have fewer internal locus of control, report loneliness more often (Pinkvart& Sorensen, 2001), are more likely to be widowed, and are exposed to inequality of opportunity, especially among older peers.

One aspect of subjective well-being is life satisfaction, which is an individual's cognitive evaluation of his/her life (Diener & Diener, 1995). Research has documented many benefits for people with high life satisfaction. A recent longitudinal study of participants found that elevated life satisfaction functions as a buffer against the impact of stressful life events on the development of psychopathology (Suldo& Huebner, 2004). Studies of life satisfaction have been helpful in clarifying how individuals respond to different life circumstances, especially stressful ones. It is not surprising that a lot of research has been done on life satisfaction with adults, given that the willingness to act productively towards the main goals of adulthood such as relationships, parenting, work, community involvement) is linked to their satisfaction in these areas of life (Diener et al, 1999). Cummins and Nistico (2002) have argued that in more politically and economically favorable circumstances, life satisfaction must involve some process of comparison between current experience and internalized norms. Life satisfaction reflects both the extent to which basic needs are met and the extent to which other goals are considered achievable, with the satisfaction of basic needs being more central for people living in less favored circumstances. Life satisfaction is made up of commitment to the goals and beliefs about achieving those goals (Diener et al, 1999). Research concluded that demographic factors explain very little variation in BS in adults. In particular, in other research (Lyubomirsky, 2001), it has been stated that objective circumstances, demographic variables and life events do not represent more than 8 percent to 15 percent of the variance of the happiness. Evidence indicates that wealthier adults are generally happier than less wealthy adults. However, the influence of income appears to be small. Given that income provides access to resources and that resources can enable participants to meet their basic needs and achieve their goals, it seems likely that life satisfaction for most groups of participants is associated with the level of family income (Granzin and Haggard, 2000). Dew and Huebner (1994) found that life satisfaction was moderately related to the family socioeconomic status (SES) of participants, but other research shows contradictory results regarding the demographics of the family in general (Hagerty, 2000; Huebner et al. , 2000). Therefore, the relationship between family income and the life satisfaction of participants may well be reduced in groups with relatively high living standards (Huebner, 1991; Grob et al, 1996).

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Corresponding author: Mrs Ayushi Gupta and Dr. Poonam Devdutt

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OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

Following are the objectives of the present research:

1. To test the significance of gender difference in health satisfaction of elderly people.
2. To test the significance of gender difference in personal satisfaction of elderly people.
3. To test the significance of gender difference in economic satisfaction of elderly people.
4. To test the significance of gender difference in marital satisfaction of elderly people.
5. To test the significance of gender difference in social satisfaction of elderly people.
6. To test the significance of gender difference in job satisfaction of elderly people.

HYPOTHESES OF THIS STUDY

Following hypotheses were proposed for this study:

1. There is no significant gender difference in health satisfaction of elderly people.
2. There is no significant gender difference in personal satisfaction of elderly people.
3. There is no significant gender difference in economic satisfaction of elderly people.
4. There is no significant gender difference in marital satisfaction of elderly people.
5. There is no significant gender difference in social satisfaction of elderly people.
6. There is no significant gender difference in job satisfaction of elderly people.

METHODOLOGY

Design: Quasi-experimental research design was used in this study.

Population and Sample: For this study 150 women and 150 men living in old age home situated in Meerut city, selected with purposive sampling.

Variables of the Study

Independent Variable

1. Gender (male and female)

Dependent Variable

1. Life-satisfaction
 - 1.1. Health Satisfaction
 - 1.2. Personal Satisfaction
 - 1.3. Economic Satisfaction
 - 1.4. Marital Satisfaction
 - 1.5. Social Satisfaction
 - 1.6. Job Satisfaction

TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Life Satisfaction Scale: Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS) prepared by Alam and Dr. RamjiSrivastava and published by National Psychological Corporation, Agra was used for the measurement of dependent variable. This scale consists of 60 items with a yes/no response. The test-retest reliability of the scale was .84 which was obtained by administering it with a time interval of six weeks. The validity of the scale obtained by correlating it with Saxena's adjustment inventory and Srivataav's adjustment inventory was .74 and .82.

RESULTS

As we know that life satisfaction consists of various areas, such as health, personal, economic, marital, social, and job satisfaction. Table-1 describes that male elderly residents of Meerut living in old-age-homes have significantly greater life satisfaction than female participants ($M_{\text{Male}} = 41.25$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 38.77$; $t = 2.33$; $p < .05$). The higher mean score of male participants clearly shows that male elders living in old-age-homes tend to experience greater satisfaction with their life in comparison of female elders living in old-age-homes. It should not be declared that the gender is alone factor to produce difference in life satisfaction of elderly people, as the studies of many studies proved the significance of socio-economic status (Andrews & Robinson, 1991; Diener, 1994; Huebner, 1997; Huebner et al, 1999).

Further, looking for the results on various areas of life satisfaction, we observe that regarding the health satisfaction ($M_{\text{Male}} = 6.73$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 6.02$; $t = 3.198$; $p < .01$), personal satisfaction ($M_{\text{Male}} = 6.69$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 6.21$; $t = 2.54$; $p < .05$), and social satisfaction ($M_{\text{Male}} = 7.02$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 7.32$; $t = 3.08$; $p < .01$). Regarding economic ($M_{\text{Male}} = 7.18$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 7.06$), marital ($M_{\text{Male}} = 7.13$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 6.92$), and job satisfaction ($M_{\text{Male}} = 6.50$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 6.24$) elderly male and female residents living in old-age-homes of Meerut were found to have no

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significant mean difference. It means that the levels of economic, marital and job satisfactions of male participants are not significantly higher or lower than female participants.

Table-1: Gender Difference with regard to Areas of Life Satisfaction (N_{Male}= 150, N_{Female}= 150)

	N	Means	S.D.	SE _D	t-value
Overall Life Satisfaction	Male	41.25	7.25	1.06	2.33*
	Female	38.77			
Health	Male	6.73	1.921	.222	3.198*
	Female	6.02			
Personal	Male	6.69	1.64	.189	2.54*
	Female	6.21			
Economic	Male	7.18	1.79	.206	.582
	Female	7.06			
Marital	Male	7.13	1.88	.217	.968
	Female	6.92			
Social	Male	7.02	1.98	.228	3.08**
	Female	6.32			
Job	Male	6.50	1.66	.191	1.36
	Female	6.24			

**** = Significant at .01-level; * = Significant at .05-level**



Figure-1: Bar Graph for Respondents' Mean Scores regarding Health Satisfaction

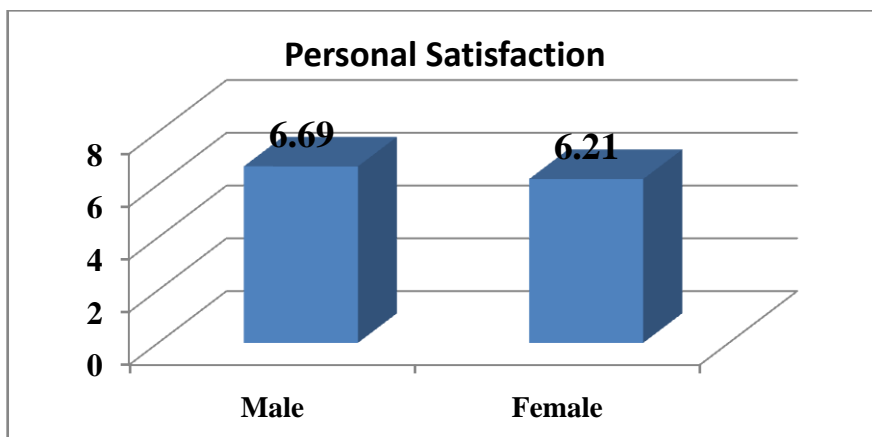


Figure-2: Bar Graph for Respondents' Mean Scores regarding Personal Satisfaction

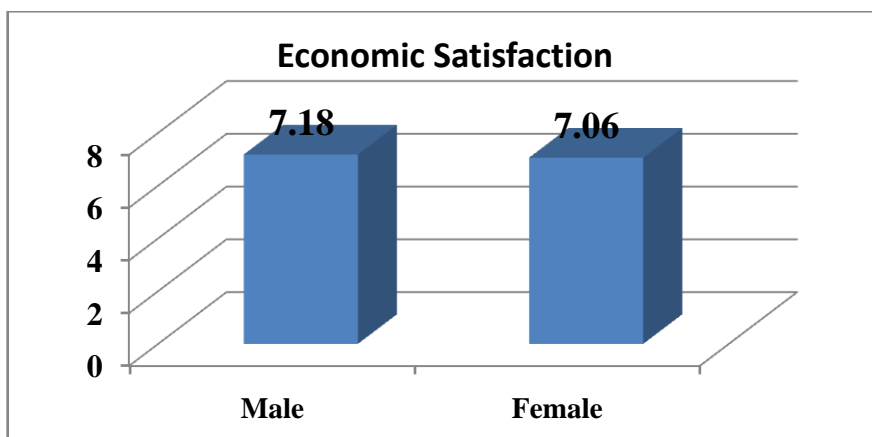


Figure-3: Bar Graph for Respondents' Mean Scores regarding Economic Satisfaction

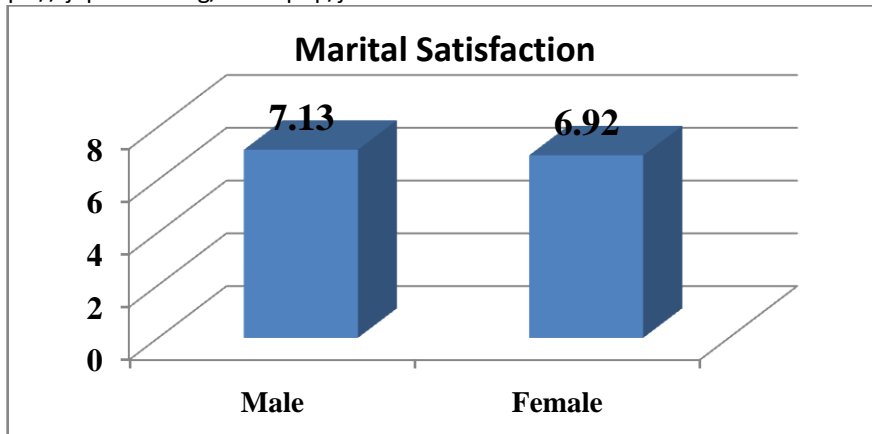


Figure-4: Bar Graph for Respondents' Mean Scores regarding Marital Satisfaction

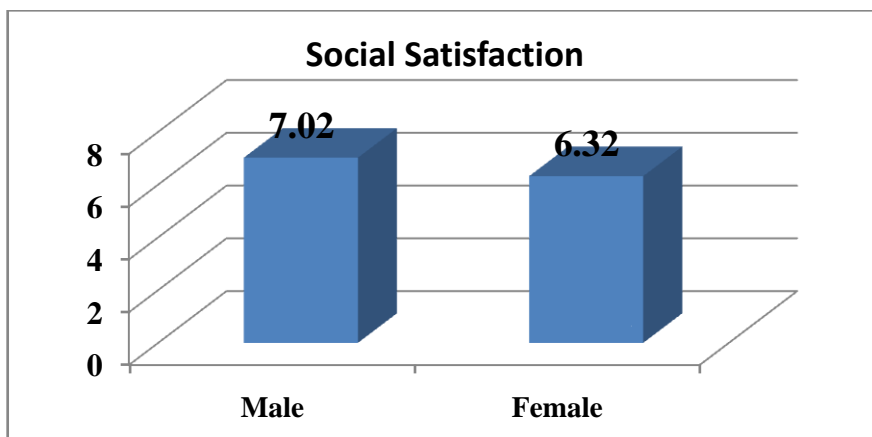


Figure-5: Bar Graph for Respondents' Mean Scores regarding Social Satisfaction

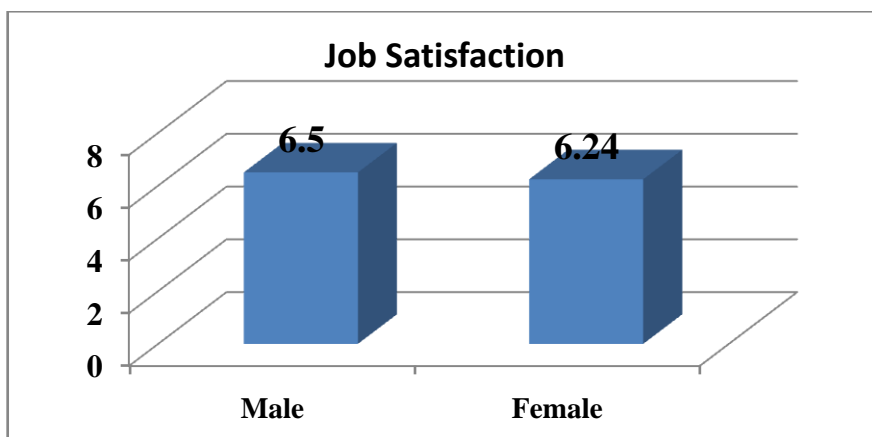


Figure-6: Bar Graph for Respondents' Mean Scores regarding Job Satisfaction

CONCLUSION

The results of this study have clearly shown that there exists gender difference in life satisfaction of residents in old-age homes. Old age women's average score on overall life satisfaction was lower than that of men. In India, though, women had a high position in the family, but due to the change in family structure and social values, their status has declined. Women of all ages feel powerless in this male-dominated society. The low level of education of older women makes it difficult for them to adapt easily to the changing world. Also, compared to older men, older women's lower degree of social interaction and activities may increase isolation. Apart from this, older women have to deal with many types of mental issues. Although these problems are experienced by both men and women, economic dependence and lack of physical strength add to the difficulties for women. Life satisfaction in different sociocultural groups, with the view that the eco-cultural factor tends to help shape patterns of relations between personality and situational factors (Harkness & Super, 2003). Studies of adults have identified important differences in levels and correlates of life satisfaction across countries (Diener & Diener, 1995; Suh et al, 1998).

Personal and Health Satisfaction: Regarding the personal satisfaction and health satisfaction, both, men were found to report greater degree than that of women in old age. Men and women are affected differently with respect to number of illnesses, functional capacity, reported symptoms and mortality (Oksuzyan et al., 2008). In general, women live longer than men, but suffer higher levels of comorbidity and functional impairment and rate their health as worse (Case and Paxson, 2005). This pattern is often referred to as the gender-health paradox. Sex-specific patterns of morbidity and mortality suggest that sex should be considered when studying life satisfaction and its association with medical-based health measures in older adults.

Economic and Job Satisfaction: In this study, a significant difference between older men and women in financial satisfaction was found. Men reported higher mean scores than older women on financial satisfaction. According to Revicki and Mitchell (1990) financial satisfaction as measured by perceived economic deprivation has been shown to be related to lower life satisfaction, so financial security appears to be an important component of satisfaction with life in older age. Although well-being does not increase with more money to spend, the experience of financial insecurity probably poses a fundamental threat to life satisfaction even in old age. Thus, older women generally had low levels of education and did not work, leaving them financially dependent on their spouses.

Social and Marital Satisfaction: Though on marital satisfaction, men were not found different from women, but on social satisfaction, they reported greater satisfaction than women of older age. Fujita and Diener (2005) found that social resources predict life satisfaction for both men and women, but less predicts life satisfaction for women. Perhaps women's role as gatekeepers to friends and family, both a blessing and a burden, leads them to be relatively more dependent on social support.

Concluding Comments

Following concluding comments can be drawn in the light of findings:

1. The hypothesis that 'there is no significant gender difference in health satisfaction of elderly people' is rejected.
2. The hypothesis that 'there is no significant gender difference in personal satisfaction of elderly people' is rejected.
3. The hypothesis that 'there is no significant gender difference in economic satisfaction of elderly people' is accepted.
4. The hypothesis that 'there is no significant gender difference in marital satisfaction of elderly people' is accepted.
5. The hypothesis that 'there is no significant gender difference in social satisfaction of elderly people' is rejected.
6. The hypothesis that 'there is no significant gender difference in job satisfaction of elderly people' is accepted.

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