



PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS; OLD AGE AND PREVALENCE

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ABSTRACT... Psychological anthropology is one of the most current academic discipline; the intellectual study of the association between the individual and culture debatably instigated in the late nineteenth century, when W. H. R. Rivers and his contemporaries commenced an expedition to Melanesia to examine the perceptions of the local people. **Objective:** objective of the study is to find relationship between old age and psychological disorders. **Study Design:** Cross sectional. **Study Locale:** The study was conducted in Rawalpindi city. **Material and method:** A structured questionnaire was designed to investigate all the variables of the study. A sample of 500 respondents were drawn from the older population (older persons) of Rawalpindi city by using convenient sampling technique. Data entry and analysis was done by using SPSS. **Results:** There was a significant relationship found between old age and psychological disorders. According to this study, older people are suffering from psychological disorders namely; anxiety, sadness, depression, isolation, insomnia, dementia, and feeling of being useless. **Conclusion:** Older persons are more vulnerable to the mental illness and psychological problems. Some problems are prevailed in high proportion among elder persons such as anxiety, insomnia and feeling of being useless. Good mind is bound with good health, this clearly depicts that older persons are not suffering from poor psychological health but also they are facing adverse health conditions. Statistical observations show that some of the older adults facing more than one psychological problem, their ratio is 6.2% of total sample.

Key words: Gerontology, Psychological Anthropology, Psychological Disorders, Aging

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INTRODUCTION

Psychological anthropology, as defined by Barnouw (1985), Greer and Trench (2008) that this subfield of Anthropology is one of the most current academic discipline; this is the intellectual study of the association between the individual and culture debatably instigated in the late nineteenth century, when W. H. R. Rivers and his contemporaries commenced an expedition to Melanesia to examine the perceptions of the local people.^{1,2}

Irshad, Chaudhry and Ahmed (2014) cited Ian Stuart-Hamilton (2011) that Gerontology, studies the old age and ageing. Even though everyone has an unconscious reason of what 'old age' and 'aging' are, providing a comprehensive objective explanation is astonishingly difficult. Ageing could be said just to be the path of growing older. Falling on tradition and practice, we can relate that old age is determined as the completion section of

the life, and for those who must have a number to give to this, it is further clarified as initiation at about 60 years of age. Each gerontologists possess his own threshold ages for the onset, but 60 is a sensible agreed digit. In definite statement, it has been renowned by the most of the literature for approximately 200 years.^{3,4} Aging has been explained by Richard (1962) as the general constellation of social, biological and psychological alterations that occur in last stage of life.⁵

The United Nations population fund (2012) uses the standard of 60 years of age or above to denote to older persons.⁶ The World Health Organization (1992) measured health as complete physical, psychological, and social well-being and the ability to function in the aspect of changing circumstances. The WHO also put prominence on the "topmost conceivable level of health" that permits people to make a contribution in social life and work competently. Michaud et.al (2001)

and Warner et.al (1995) cited World Health Organization that psychological disorders are the world's prominent cause of disability after cardiac disease.^{7,8,9}

Older persons are more vulnerable to the illnesses and disorders psychologically and physically. There are many elements of exposure, such as poor diet, inadequate living status, economic dependency, death of life partner or friends, these factors can cause the physical and psychological complications in older adults. Some common psychological disorders reported among older persons are depression, isolation, anxiety, dementia, sleeplessness, amnesia, sadness and feeling of being useless.

Thornicroft (2013) denoted that Psychological problems are linked with major social and financial concerns. Patients with mental disorders have high mortality rates¹⁰ and according to Wilson and Cleary (1995) psychological problems result into low quality of life¹¹, Myers, Rosen, (1999) identified lower self-esteem among older persons with psychological problems.¹² According to Morgan et.al., (2007), psychological problems of later life cause the absence of educational and financial opportunities, thus restraining their chances of economic progress and divesting them of social networks and position within the community.¹³

Dementia is commonly found in older persons and this disease has deteriorating effects on the lives of aging people. According to World health organization (2010) Dementia is a disorder relating decline in memory, thinking, behavior and the capability to accomplish everyday actions such as eating, dressing, personal cleanliness and toilet activities. It generally affects older persons, even though it is not a usual part of getting old.¹⁴ A report by WHO and the Alzheimer Disease Association International (ADI) in 2012 proposes a rough projected frequency of 4.7% among people 60 years and over. This specifies that 35.6 million people are suffering from dementia. The total number of people with dementia is estimated to almost double every 20 years. That is, to 65.7 million by 2030 and up to 115.4 million by 2050.¹⁵

Crocker et al. (2006) pulled attention to the variety of practices and the way in which possibility elements (e.g. poor health, depression, lack of social integration) turn into significant, in part, as they were understood as indicating a miserable future categorized by further decline, reliance on others and isolation.¹⁶

Depressive symptoms commonly seen among older persons. As the study of Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME, 2010) states that depressive disorder is common in old age. Statistics indicates that the disability adjusted life years (DALYs) for depressive symptoms (major depressive disorder plus dysthymia) over the age of 60 is 9.17 million or 1.6% of total disability adjusted life years in this old age.¹⁷

The major objective of current study is to examine the relationship between old age and psychological problems.

Null-Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between old age and psychological disorders.

Alternate Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between old age and psychological disorders.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

An extensive questionnaire was designed to investigate all variables of the study. Data collection was supervised and overseen under the observation of the officials of the PMAS-Arid Agriculture University. The questionnaire was based on the close ended questions according the objectives of the study. A sample of 500 hundred respondents was drawn by using convenient sampling technique. The purpose of present study was to explore the psychological problems of older persons in Rawalpindi city. Data was entered and analyzed by using SPSS.

RESULTS

Age	Sex distribution		Total
	Male	Female	
60-65	197	90	287
66-70	71	26	97
71-75	45	12	57
76-80	33	10	43
80 +	11	5	16
Total	357	143	500

Table-I. Age and sex distribution of respondents

Table-I consists of the age and sex distribution of the respondents of the present study. As mentioned above that 357 males and 143 female respondents participated in this ageing study. All of the 500 respondents belong to different age groups between 60 to 80 years. Majority of the respondents fall in the first age group (60-65) with total number of 287 including both male and female. The second highest ratio of the respondents are from 66-70 age group with total number of 97 which is further divided into 71 male and 26 females. According to table 1 statistics, the lowest proportion of respondent's participation is among age of 80 years and above group.

Source of Income	Frequency	Percent
Savings	16	3.2%
Property	5	1%
Agriculture	11	2.2%
Pension	92	18.4%
Others	347	69.4%
Not Applicable	29	5.8%
Total	500	100%

Table-II. Distribution of major source of income

Table-II contains the information about the distribution of major source of income of the respondents of the study. In old age, one of the major problem is economic problem. In developing countries, majority of older people don't have any permanent source of income to meet their essential needs. As current table 2 depicts that majority of the respondents (347) are economically dependent on their family, while 90 respondents have pension to meet their needs which is not sufficient to live a healthy life. There is a small proportion of older adults who can meet their needs by different means such as savings (16 respondents), property (5 respondents) and 11 respondents generating income from the profession of agriculture.

Table-III depicts the recorded psychological disorders among the older persons of Rawalpindi city. There is a list of common psychological disorders associated to later life. These problems are depression, isolation, (feeling of being) useless, sadness, anxiety, amnesia, dementia/Alzheimer, and insomnia respectively. Table 3 is basically a cross tabulation to find the association between the old age and psychological disorders. As revealed above that depression is more common among two age groups (66-70 & 71-75) the ratio is 10.3% and 10.5%. Older people become more isolated as they grow more old, respondents with the age of 80 years and above with isolation problem are 18.8%, this percentage is higher than the respondents between the ages

Disorders	Age Groups					Total
	60-65	66-70	71-75	76-80	80 +	
Depression	7.3%	10.3%	10.5%	7.0%		8.0%
Isolation	8.7%	15.5%	15.8%	14.0%	18.8%	11.6%
Uselessness	13.9%	11.3%	19.3%	16.3%	31.2%	14.8%
Sadness	15.0%	17.5%	8.8%	9.3%		13.8%
Anxiety	17.1%	12.4%	12.3%	14.0%	6.2%	15.0%
Amnesia	10.1%	13.4%	8.8%	20.9%	25.0%	12.0%
Dementia/Alzheimer	6.3%	4.1%	1.8%	4.7%		5.0%
Insomnia	13.2%	14.4%	15.8%	11.6%	12.5%	13.6%
More than one	8.4%	1.0%	7.0%	2.3%	6.2%	6.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table-III. Psychological disorders among older persons of different age groups

of 60 to 76 years. Most of the older adults feel useless in their later life, their total percentage in study is 14.8, majority of the older adults between the ages of 76-80 and above they have the feeling that they are useless. The fourth major problem reported is sadness among older persons, 13.8 percent older adults have sad and gloomy mood most of the time. Anxiety is a major psychological disorder among the people of current era, but its effects on older adults are adverse, 15 percent of the total respondents are suffering from anxiety, which is higher than any other psychological disorder. Its prevalence is more common among the age group of 60-65 years. Older persons with the age of 80 and above they are more likely to suffer from amnesia, 25 percent of the respondents with the age of 80 years and above have the problem of amnesia. Dementia/Alzheimer is associated with old age, current study shows that 5 percent of the respondents reported that they have the symptoms of Dementia/Alzheimer. Insomnia (sleeplessness) is common among older persons, this disorder is reported among all age groups of older persons, 13.6 percent older persons have problems while sleeping in nights. Above crosstab elaborates that 6.2% respondents reported that they are facing more than one psychological disorder.

By applying chi-square on cross tab 3 “P” calculated value is 0.2 which is less than 0.5, the result clearly expresses that there is a significant relationship between old age and psychological disorders. So alternate hypothesis accepted and rejected the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

As human body grow old, level of energies and strength get weaker, this result into weak immune system. As old age is a global phenomenon, the problems of older persons increasing with their increasing life expectancy. Healthy body and healthy mind both important for better and healthy living for human being. Human’s physical and mental health depend greatly on socioeconomic condition, living status and diet pattern of person’s life. According to WHO and EURO (2013) findings, issues such as poverty,

social isolation, loneliness, loss of economic independence and losses of different kinds, can affect mental health and general health of older persons. Older adults are more probable to experience incidents such as bereavements or physical debility that upset emotional well-being and can result in worse mental health. They may also be bare to ill-treatment at home and in old care institutions¹⁸. Above mentioned factors can affect older person’s mental, psychological and physical health. Present study revealed that with the increasing age older people get different psychological complications. There are few mental and psychological problems recorded in this study, listed as depression, anxiety, isolation, insomnia, sadness, amnesia and feeling of being useless. The proportion of anxiety is higher than other psychological problems. Barrowclough et al. (2001) emphasized the co-occurrence of indications of anxiety and physical health complications – 80 per cent of the older persons in their clinical research on anxiety complications in older people had significant physical health issues.¹⁹

It is observed that in most of the communities, older persons are isolated from other young family members. Young generation feel shame in socialization of older persons with problems. Older persons are bound to their specific room and place; they can’t meet with coming guests at different occasions in the family. This is one aspect of isolation, the other aspect is older persons himself refuse to go out and socialize with friends and family. The reason is they lost interest in life and other recreational activities because of the death of life partner and good friends.

Economic and physical activities keep human mind and body active, these kind of activities create the sense of being important in older person’s mind. When an older person gets retired or became economically inactive (dependent), he feels that he is useless and a burden on other members of his family. Ill behavior of family members play a vital role in this situation, this result into many other psychological disorders in later life.

Sadness is a mood disorder which prevails among older persons. This disorder becomes the part of their personality, reason behind this problem is the older person can't find anything interesting in their life or they are being neglected from their family members and community. One of the major problems with older person is memory loss/amnesia; this problem could be short term or long term. It is commonly observed in older persons in their later life, they are slow or unable to remember someone's (familiar) name, in severe conditions older persons are unable to recognize the faces from his/her own family. In global perspective, Alzheimer/ Dementia are increasing rapidly, but its ratio in present study is not so high. Although its prevalence among older persons increasing alarmingly. As reported by Alzheimer's disease International (2009) have reported a convincing result of occurrence rates across the world. In Western Europe, 6.9% of older persons over 60 years are projected to have problem of dementia, with 21.7% of older adults between 85–89 age group and 43.1% of those aged 90 and over being contracted.²⁰

It is significantly noted that there is a strong relationship between insomnia (sleeplessness) and old age. As present study illustrated that most of the older persons feel difficulty to fall asleep and stay asleep, they often complaint of frequent awakening during their sleep. Majority of the older persons take tranquilizers to get rid of sleeplessness. As indicated by Hauri & Linde (1996) sleep turbulences are frequently complained by the elderly to their medical doctor²¹, similarly Morgan (1987) and Roth (1993) indicated that general practitioner write most medicines for sleep medication for the elderly persons.^{22,23}

CONCLUSIONS

It is clearly illustrated that there is a strong relationship between psychological disorders and old age. Older persons are more vulnerable to the mental illness and psychological problems. Some problems are prevailed in high ratio among elder persons such as anxiety, insomnia and feeling of being useless. Good mind is bound

with good health, this clearly depicts that older persons are not suffering from poor psychological health but also they are facing adverse health conditions. Statistical observations show that some of the older adults facing more than one psychological problem, their ratio is 6.2 of total sample. Study by Center for Mental Health Services (2000) revealed that efforts to stop psychological disorders amongst older adults have also been found scarce. At present, there is no nationwide programme to encourage mental health and prevent psychological and behavioral disorders in elderly.²⁴


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