

Life Satisfaction and Social Support: A study of Aged Women and Men With Reference to North Bihar, India

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Abstract: The present enquiry was aimed at studying the life satisfaction and social support of aged men and women with particular reference to North Bihar, India. For the present piece of research work total sample (N=150) comprising aged women (n=75) and aged men (n=75) randomly selected from different districts of North Bihar viz., Begusarai, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur and Samastipur. Subjects' age were ranged between 55 – 75 years. Data collected through questionnaires schedules individually from aged women and men by taking them in to confidence and assured that responses provided by them on the items of schedules will be kept strictly confidential. Having tabulated and analyzed the data, results revealed the fact that there is high significant difference between the group of aged women and men towards their degree of life satisfaction which has been statistically found significant at .01 level of confidence, although, aged men were found more prone to higher degree of life satisfaction than women. Moreover, aged women have shown higher degree of social support than aged men, hence, significant difference have been found between the group of aged at .01 level of confidence towards their life satisfaction. The discrepancies of results obtained have been discussed in detail by giving probable reasons.

Keywords: life satisfaction, social support, aged men and women, North Bihar

INTRODUCTION

Daily life is being adversely affected now-a-days by stress and it deteriorates our life satisfaction and at this juncture every individual especially aged needs social support for maintaining his degree of life satisfaction. Hence, the present research investigation was aimed at studying the Life Satisfaction in relation to Social Support with reference to aged men and women with particular reference to North Bihar, India.

Life satisfaction, morale and happiness are often used interchangeably referring to psychological well being of the individual. Psychological well-being includes mental functioning such as happiness, morale, life satisfaction, and the absence of psychopathology (e.g. depression). George [1] defined life satisfaction as a cognitive process by which an individual assesses his/her progress towards desired goals. George also defined happiness as “transitory moods of gaiety reflecting the affect that people feel toward their current state of affairs”. Finally she defined morale as fit between the individual and the environment, the acceptance of those aspects of life that can not be changed and more generally it depends on how positive one's outlook of life is. In addition to these, it is generally observed that motivational spheres of life

contribute a lot to getting individual's life satisfaction which provides all round capacity with commitment of work and family.

Old age is the fading period of life cycle. It is a period when people move away from hay day of life, full of power, vitality and happiness. According to Hurlock [2] age sixty is often considered as the dividing line between middle age and old age. The last stage in lifespan is subdivided into early old age, which extends from age sixty to seventy, and advance old age, which begins at seventy and extends to the end of life. Thus old age has been viewed either as a transition that is accompanied by psychological distress or as a time of continued, or even enhanced, subjective wellbeing. Palmore and Kivett [3] have pointed out that the best predictor of life satisfaction is the person's ratings of life satisfaction in the past and that initial values or changes in other variables appeared to be unrelated to changes in life satisfaction. Moreover, Taves and Hansen [4] point out that health problem appear to detract from enjoying a number of close friendships, satisfaction with work, and satisfaction with family. Whereas various researches have shown that life satisfaction may also affect health when a person is dissatisfied with life, it means that an individual is

experiencing negative vive that are coloring his/her view of the world around him/her. There may also be relative lack of positive feelings due to radical change in the state of mind. Such dissatisfaction means important needs and expectations that are not being met as pointed out by Lawton[5].

During reviewing the literature on the life satisfaction it was observed that there are basically two approaches to life satisfactions. The first focuses upon the overt behavior of the individual and uses social criteria of success and competence. The second approach is to be viewed from an individual's internal frame i.e. the individual's own interpretation and evaluation of his present or past life, and his satisfaction or his happiness. Thus the present article is approached to study on the social criteria of life satisfaction to get successful aging. Hence, the present endeavor will fill the void of knowledge in the area of aging.

These days, impact of social support on life satisfaction has attracted the interest of psychologists, behaviorists, public health professionals and NGOs having different perspectives and orientations. Social support refers to helpful social interactions that make people feel better. People who interact closely with friends and relatives are better able to avoid illness and if illness occurs, to recover from it sooner than those who are interpersonally isolated.

Social support may be in several forms such as family, community, and other social institutions like religious and state. The rising number of literature documents the importance of social support network in maintaining good morale, happiness, psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Hence, adequate social support system helps individuals avoid internalizing diminished views of them. The greater integration in a social network is associated with fewer mental and physical health problems[6]. Social support as information that leads the individual to believe that he is cared and loved, esteemed and valued, and that he belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligations[7].

Objective of the present study:

On the basis of past researches and self observations the present research investigation was aimed to assess the life satisfaction of elderly and to find out its relationship with social support availed by them. Various study of Life Satisfaction have been found by reviewing the literature available but none of the study was found with reference to North Bihar aged people. Thus, the present study is of immense value in the area concerned and the findings will help to understand the behavior of elderly people especially in North Bihar and will fill the void of knowledge in the area chosen by present investigators.

Hypotheses:

On the basis of the above mentioned broad objectives the following hypotheses have been formulated.

1. There will not be significant difference between the group of aged women and aged men in terms of their degree of Life Satisfaction.
2. There will not be significant difference between the group of aged women and men in terms of their degree of Social Support.
3. Aged women will differ from men in terms of their degree of Life Satisfaction and on their degree of Social Support as well.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

For the present piece of research work total sample (N=150) comprising aged women (n=75) and aged men (n=75) were randomly selected from different districts of North Bihar. The major districts such as Darbhanga, Samastipur, Madhubani and Begusarai were given priority for the present piece of enquiry. The subjects' age ranged between 55 – 75 years.

Tools Used:

The following measures / tools were used:

Life Satisfaction Scale:

For measuring the degree of life satisfaction of the aged women, aged working women and aged men – a scale developed by Chadha & Van Willigen [8] was used. The scale assesses life satisfaction as an individual's interpretation of his past and present life and consequent happiness and satisfaction. This scale is particularly designed to measure the construct of life satisfaction among older adults in an Indian cultural setting. The scale consists of 27 items based on Likert – type 7 – point scale in which 12 items are scored in reverse order i.e. 7 to 1 (for strongly disagree to strongly agree). In this scale, higher score indicates high life satisfaction. The scale has a high reliability value of 0.95 and is therefore a good measure of life satisfaction for the elderly population.

Social Support Questionnaire:

For measuring perception of social support, a scale developed by Nehra, Kulhara and Verma [9] was used. The questionnaire consists of 18 items having four alternative responses. In positive items, score of 4 will be given to most agreed, 3 to agreed, 2 for to some extent and 1 to least agreed. In this questionnaire schedule, 11 items are negatively phrased; hence, these items have to be scored in the reverse order. The total score indicates the amount of support perceived by the individual. Higher score indicates more perceived social support.

difference between the group of aged women and men in terms of their degree of Social Support also stands rejected. . It is because of the fact that the obtained scores of social support have been found little quite high as the maximum scores of social support is 72. Thus, the obtained scores on social support is quite

favorable but between the two groups as stated above have been found significant at .01 levels of confidence.

Table – 4 of the results depict the clear cut picture regarding the levels of perceived reactions to social support between the group of aged women and men comparatively.

Table-3: Table showing differences between the mean scores of social support between the aged women group and aged men group on life satisfaction

Group of Aged	N=150	Mean	S.D	't'	Level of significance
Old Age Men	75	47.34	4..69	6.5	0.01
Old Age Women	75	52.93	5.69		

Table-4: Table showing comparative levels of perceived social support among aged Women and Men in North Bihar, India

LEVELS	OLD AGE MEN		OLD AGE WOMEN	
	n = 75	Percentage	n = 75	Percentage
High	35	46.67%	43	57.33%
Moderate	31	41.33%	27	36%
Low	9	12%	05	6.67%

Mean = 47.34

Mean = 52.93

Elaborating the table – 4 with regard to the levels of perceived social support among old age men and old age women that indicated that 57.33% of old age women especially in North Bihar area had higher levels of social support in comparison to old age men i.e. 46.67% which is comparatively low from old age women, whereas, 36% of old age women have shown moderate levels of social support in comparison to old age men i.e. 41.33% and moreover, 6.67% of old age women have reported low level of social support than old age men i.e. 12% which is comparatively high from their female counterparts. Although both the group of aged men and women have indicated favorable inclination towards social support on their degree of perceived life satisfaction as their mean scores of social support are $X=47.34$ (for men) and $X=52.93$ (for women) which are very satisfactory as the maximum score of the scale is 72.

Discussing the results obtained, it is important to be mentioned that higher degree of significant differences between the aged group of women and men on the degree of life satisfaction and social support as well have been found as their t – values have been found statistically significant. The obtained results especially from where the sample has been drawn seem to be logical, in the sense that when people grow older and older, their behaviors become typically different. At that time they become motivated towards spiritual and social life. They usually prefer to get involved in religious group and think about spiritual practices. Hence, both the group of aged women and men, although, all men group have shown higher degree of perceived inclination to life satisfaction than women.

The present obtained result can also be interpreted that everybody wants to be happy, no matter the age; that's why it's no surprise that even elderly women are seeking happiness in life. It is also important to be mentioned that enjoyment in life, a sense of purpose, and happiness can still elude elderly women, making these all the more important to attain, especially in one's advanced years in life[10].

Having discussed the results pertaining to life satisfaction of aged women, table – 3 and 4 have shown the picture regarding differences between the mean scores of social support of aged women and men towards life satisfaction which reveals the fact that the women were prone to have social support than the group of aged men. The obtained results is quite favorable in the sense that in Indian society still elderly are getting more assistance and benefit from joint family structure. Because family members cares of them by remembering that every individual will taste of it if he/she alive on earth. The tendencies of these results are to be pointed out here that the status of women in India is not much different from that in other cultures. As a product of biology in part and to a great extent socialization practices perhaps women tend to be different psychologically than men. They are more sensitive than men to social interaction, develop closer and more extensive social network and are more giving in these relationships[11-12]. It seems that because of this greater sensitivity and emotionality, perhaps, the group of old age women are more likely to seek help than their counterparts viz, old age men. Thus, they have been found to be significant difference interns of social support.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the obtained results and discussions, the following conclusions were summed-up:

1. Significance of difference has been found between the group of old age women and old age men in their degree of perceived reactions towards life satisfaction.
2. Old age men were found more prone to life satisfaction than old age women especially in North Bihar – India from where the present piece of research work has been carried out.
3. Significance of difference has been found between the group of old age women and old age men on the scale of Social Support towards their degree of life satisfaction.
4. Old age women were found more prone to have social support than old age men to maintaining their over all life satisfaction.
5. On the basis of past researches and observations the important conclusions are summed up. The studies and discussions mentioned above seem to be the reasons because of the fact that social support especially from informal social networking from the side of members of home either they live in joint family or nuclear family are always needed for successful aging. This is only the way by which life satisfaction with positive sense of commitment and work ethics can be maintained without having any feeling of shyness, inferiority and sense of loosing esteem needs, etc. It is often seen that joint family provides social supports to the weak, aged, sick and disabled person. Hence, social security, emotional support, and sympathy become more important for the old age. It is often seen that being the elder member of the joint family the elders of old age members are obeyed, their inner feelings are recognized, and thus their status is not undermined. So, the old age members of the joint family experience less depression, anxiety, stress and harassment in comparison to those old age members who are living in nuclear family set-up. Further empirical and theoretical researches on different aspects relating to aging is needed especially in North Bihar – India to understand the behavior of aged because of the fact that they have contributed a lot to the betterment of society in general and their services for the promotion of nation can not be overlooked.

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