ADJUSTMENT PATTERN OF ELDERLY PEOPLE BELONGING TO NUCLEAR FAMILIES OF KOLKATA CITY

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Abstract

Aging, the process of growing old regardless of chronological age, is a natural, continuous and universal phenomenon. The ageing process was associated with a number of factors like health status, economic independence and their role expectation in the family and so on. Family is the sub-system of the society which is perceived to be the most relevant to mental health. Functions of the family are geared facilitating the promotion and preservation of health in general and mental health in particular. Individual perceives and experiences a sense of general well-being in relation to the environment. One's need for and ability to give care is negotiated by one's place in family's life-cycle and one's social identity. The social structure of family is culturally shaped and globally varied. The aim of the present investigation is to study the adjustment pattern of the elderly people belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city. A group of 200 elderly people were selected as sample in this investigation. A General Information Schedule, Adjustment Pattern Questionnaire and Priority Need Questionnaire were administered to them. The findings reveal that adjustment pattern decreases with increase in age. Besides this, female group are more adjusted than that of the male group. Monthly income of the family has a significant role in this regard. Elderly people may live in a good mental state and also able to adjust with other family members if the priority need is to be considered properly.

Keywords : Elderly people, adjustment pattern, priority need, nuclear family

The family is as important in later life as during childhood. The family also provides assistance, financial support or help through all life's changes. Older people with healthy marriages and positive relationships with their children enjoy their family life in the later years. Nuclear family consists of two mature adults of opposite sex who live in together in a union (marriage) recognized by other members of the society, their father, father-in-law, mother, mother-in-law and their children. These ties vary from one society to another (Lowie, 1948). Life satisfaction of retired people is a function of close family ties, focus on spiritual growth, physical well-being and involvement in greater number of social activities. Elderly people those who take a positive attitude or an attitude of constructiveness, prepare and plan for retirement, maintain a sense of self, expand their role, involve themselves in the community and social activities and remained physically healthy / fit and also adjust well to retirement. The problems of old age have gained importance in the contemporary society due to the rapid increase in the number of elderly people. The problems of aged vary from person to person and culture to culture, yet there are certain shared problems across cultures and geographical locations. Problems of aged can be biological, psychological, social or economical - all of which are interactive in nature (Kapoor and Kapoor, 2000). The problems generally faced by the retirees were shortage of money, too much free time, widowhood, feeling physically weak, fear of death, mental tension and feeling of social neglect by family members and friends (Raghani and Singh, 1970). Not only these, place-attachment, place-identity and sense of place are predominant characteristics for psychological well-being and residential satisfaction of the elderly persons. (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Bonaiuto et.al., 2002). The adjustment of the aging person depends upon the degree to which his personal and environmental circumstances offer opportunities or pose as threats to the satisfaction of his needs (Mishra, 1993). George (1980) stated that adjustment on an individual attempts to meet the demands of the environment, how individual perceives and experiences a sense of general well-being in relation to the environment. Mattila et al. (1988) investigated factors regarding adjustment to retirement and old age. The factors were : a) an unhappy experience in childhood predicts poor adjustment, b) social withdrawal predicts poor adjustment, c) compulsive activity predicts poor adjustment, d) pre-retirement predicts stress which in turn predicts poor adjustment, e) creative integrity predicts good adjustment and f) available social support predicts good adjustment in old-age and retirement. Wasson (1993) examined the status and role of retired women and aged housewives in the family and community with reference to loss of self-esteem and domination of authority. Attachment is highly relevant to psychological experience in later-life (Bradley and Thomas, 2001). It means higher levels of sense of community, friends, activity, impact of neighbour including dwelling unit and dwelling environment are important for residential satisfaction for

elderly (Kahana, et al, 2003; Pretty, et al., 2003). Besides these, a great deal of research has found that health care, family and state support, self-esteem are related to perception of happiness, sense of well-being among the aged people (Pei and Pillai, 1999). Considering the above the present investigation has been designed to study the adjustment pattern of the elderly people belonging to nuclear family of Kolkata City.

Objectives

To study the adjustment pattern of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city.

To study whether gender difference has significant role in connection with adjustment pattern of the elderly people belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city or not.

To study whether monthly income of the family has significant role in connection with adjustment pattern of the elderly people belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city or not.

To study the priority needs of the elderly people belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata City.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis - I: Elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years differ significantly in terms of adjustment pattern.

Hypothesis – II: Adjustment pattern of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years is differentially associated with gender difference.

Hypothesis – III: Adjustment pattern of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years is differentially associated with monthly income of the family.

Hypothesis – IV: Priority needs of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years differ significantly.

Sample

A group of 200 elderly people (100 male and 100 female) belonging to different nuclear families of Kolkata City were selected as sample in this investigation. The pertinent characteristics of the subjects are as follows:

(a) Age:　　　　　　　(i) 65 to 70 years

　　　　　　　　　　　(ii) 71 to 76 years

(b) Gender:　　　　　　Equal gender ratio

(c) Education:　　　　　At least class VIII

(d) Monthly income:　　(i) Rs.20,001 to Rs. 30,000 and

　　　　　　　　　　　(ii) Rs.30,001 to Rs. 40,000

Tools

(a) General Information Schedule

It consists of item like name, address, age, gender, educational qualification, monthly income etc.

(b) Adjustment Pattern Questionnaire

It consists of 50 statistically significant items answerable

in a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree where high score indicates good adjustment and vice-versa. Odd-even split-half reliability is 0.81 (developed by the investigators).

(c) Priority Need Questionnaire

There are five priority needs, viz., congenial family environment, social acceptance, engagement in light work, need for separate place to worship God and need for community hall/park. Elderly people have to rank the priority need according to their top priority as 1 and so on (developed by the investigators).

Administration, Scoring and Statistical Treatment

In consultation with the selected households, a programme schedule was prepared for collecting the data. By giving proper instruction data were collected from the elderly people belonging to different nuclear families of Kolkata city. All the data were properly scrutinized. Tabulation was done for two groups of elderly people separately. Frequency and percentages were done for general information schedule and priority need questionnaire. Mean and S.D. were calculated for adjustment pattern questionnaire. Qualitative and quantitative analysis were done. Comparisons were made by applying t-test. For priority need comparisons were made by chi-square test.

Results and Interpretation

The general characteristic data inserted in Table – 1 reveal the characteristic features of the subjects, under study.

Table 1: General characteristic features of the elderly people belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city.

General characteristic features	Male (N = 100)		Female (N = 100)		Combined (N =200)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Age in years						
(a) 65 to 70 years	50	50.00	50	50.00	100	50.00
(b) 71 to 76 years	50	50.00	50	50.00	100	50.00
2. Education						
(a) Below school final	55	55.00	63	63.00	118	59.00
(b) Above school final	45	45.00	37	37.00	82	41.00
3.Monthly income						
(a) Rs. 20,001 to Rs. 30,000	50	50.00	50	50.00	100	50.00
(b) Rs. 30,001 to Rs. 40,000	50	50.00	50	50.00	100	50.00

Data inserted in Table - 2 reveals a comparative picture between the elderly people of age group 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years belonging to different nuclear families of Kolkata city in terms of adjustment pattern. From the mean score it can be said that maximum adjustment was observed among the male group of elderly people who are 65 to 70 years old and comparatively less adjustment was observed among the female group who are within the age range 71 to 76 years. Analysis of data further reveals that the more the age the less is the adjustment pattern. In this context it can be said that elderly people those who are within 65 to 70 years are comparatively more active both physically and mentally in comparison to those elderly people who are 71 to 76 years old. When comparison was made between the two groups, significant difference was

observed in all the comparisons. Thus the Hypothesis – I which postulates, "Elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years differ significantly in terms of adjustment pattern" - is accepted in this investigation.

Table – 2: Comparison between the adjustment pattern of the elderly people of age-group 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 **years**

Categories	Adjustment pattern scores						t value
	65 to 70 years			71 to 76 years			
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
Male	50	188.69	11.34	50	175.25	10.41	6.16*
Female	50	182.34	11.12	50	170.44	10.36	5.53*
Combined	100	185.51	11.23	100	172.84	10.38	8.28*

High score indicates good adjustment and vice-versa.
Score range: 50 to 250, *p < 0.01

Comparisons were also made between the male and female group of elderly people belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city who are 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years old in terms of adjustment pattern (data inserted in Table – 3). The findings reveal that in both the cases male group are more adjusted than that of the female group. Comparative picture reveals significant difference between the male and female group of elderly people of ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years respectively. Thus, the Hypothesis – II which postulates, "Adjustment pattern of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years is differentially associated with gender difference" - is accepted in this investigation.

Table – 3: Comparisons between male and female group of elderly people of different age-groups belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city in terms of adjustment patterns

Categories	Adjustment pattern scores						T value
	Male			Female			
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
65 to 70 years	50	188.69	11.34	50	182.34	11.12	2.82**
71 to 76 years	50	175.25	10.41	50	170.44	10.36	2.31*

High score indicates good adjustment and vice-versa.
Score range: 50 to 250, *p<0.05; **p < 0.01

Considering the monthly income of the family, comparisons were also made in terms of adjustment pattern. It can be said from the findings that in case of male, female and combined group respectively, the more the income level, the less is the adjustment pattern, i.e.; the elderly people whose monthly income is within Rs. 20,001/- to Rs. 30,000/- is better adjusted than those whose monthly income is Rs. 30,001/- to Rs. 40,000/- (Data inserted in Table – 4). Comparative picture reveals significant difference in all the comparisons. Thus, the Hypothesis - III, which states, "Adjustment pattern of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to

76 years is differentially associated with monthly income of the family"– is accepted for male, female and combined group respectively.

Table – 4: Comparison between the adjustment patterns of the elderly belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city

Data inserted in Table 5A and Table 5B reveals a comparative picture between the elderly people of age group 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years belonging to different nuclear families of Kolkata city in terms of their priority needs. Five priority needs, viz; congenial family environment, social acceptance, engagement in light work, need for separate place to worship God and need for community hall/park were considered in this investigation. Analysis of data further reveals that both male and female group between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years consider that congenial family environment as top priority. When comparison was made between the two age groups priority needs no significance difference was observed for both male and female group separately. Thus, the Hypothesis – IV which states, "Priority needs of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years differ significantly" – is rejected in this investigation.

Table – 5A: Priority need of the elderly people (male) of age group 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city

Sl no	Priority Needs	65 to 70 years		71 to 76 years		Chi - square
		f	%	f	%	
1.	Congenial family environment.	13	26	14	28	
2.	Social acceptance	7	14	8	16	
3.	Engagement in light work	12	24	10	20	1.48*
4.	Need for separate place to worship God	9	18	6	12	
5.	Need for community hall/ park	9	18	24	24	

*Difference is insignificant

Table – 5B: Priority need of the elderly people (female) of age group 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata city

Sl no	Priority Needs	65 to 70 years		71 to 76 years		Chi - square
		f	%	f	%	
1.	Congenial family environment.	12	24	14	28	
2.	Social acceptance	12	24	10	20	
3.	Engagement in light work	10	20	9	18	1.63*
4.	Need for separate place to worship God	7	14	10	20	
5.	Need for community hall/ park	9	18	7	14	

*Difference is insignificant

Major findings of the study are as follows

Maximum adjustment was observed among the male group of elderly people who are 65 to 70 years old. Comparatively

in terms of monthly income group.

Category	Adjustment pattern scores									t value
	Male		t value	Female		t value	Combined			
	Mean	S.D		Mean	S.D		Mean	S.D		
a) Rs. 20,001/- to Rs. 30,000/-	190.68	11.16		187.24	11.32		188.96	11.24		
b) Rs. 30,001/- to Rs. 40,000/-	177.72	10.43	6.00*	172.45	10.11	6.88*	175.08	10.27		9.13*

Score range : 50 to 250
High score indicates favourable attitude and vice-versa
* p < 0.01

less adjustment was observed among the female group of elderly people who are 71 to 76 years old. Comparative picture reveals significant difference in connection with age difference for male, female and combined group respectively in terms of adjustment pattern. The more the age, comparatively less is the adjustment. Male group differ with female group in terms of adjustment pattern. This is true for both the age groups. The more the income level, the less is the adjustment pattern. This is also true for male, female and combined group respectively. Both male and female group of elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years consider congenial family environment as top priority. Comparative picture reveals no significant difference in this regard.

Conclusion

The aim of the present investigation was to study the adjustment pattern of the elderly people between the ages 65 to 70 years and 71 to 76 years belonging to nuclear families of Kolkata City. Accordingly, a group of 200 elderly people (100 male and 100 female) were selected as sample in this investigation. The findings reveal that better adjustment pattern was observed among the elderly who are between the ages 65 to 70 years than those of the elderly who are 71 to 76 years old. Comparative picture reveals significant difference between the two groups. Besides this, females are less adjusted than males. The more the income level the less is the adjustment pattern. Congenial family environment was opined as top priority by both the groups. Thus, measures may be taken to create the family environment more healthy and congenial in comparison to the existing condition. It can further be said that family members should stretch forward their hands of cooperation so that elderly people are able to stay in the family in a good mental state.

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