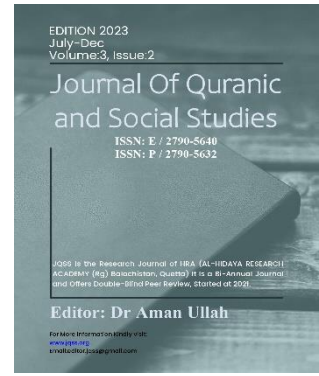


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Ageing Issues Among the Pashtun Folk in Quetta City of Balochistan

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Abstract

Aging is an integral part of each society in the world. The advancement of medicine and technology has increased life expectancy to a determined level, which has resultantly raised the elderly population. Pakistan and generally Balochistan are also in this queue, but unfortunately, the government has not framed such policies to accommodate and secure the elderly people from the hardships of life and make them independent. This study highlights the issues of elderly people in Quetta City, where the elders are mostly illiterate and hardly adjustable in technological settings. The study was carried out through a sequential technique of non-probability sampling, where data was collected from 28 informants through an unstructured interview guide to the saturation level. The findings depict that the old cohort has several issues in the research locale. These issues are social, familial, economic, psychological, mental, emotional, healthcare, and likewise. The study suggests that the government should consider the weak segment of society and form strategies to safeguard the rights and the fundamental life of the aging population.

Keywords: Ageing, Issues, Pashtuns, Elderly, Quetta City

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Introduction

The advancement of medicine and the provision of good quality support over the past fifty years has increased life expectancy, which has resulted increase in the elderly population (Itrat, 2007). These facilities have declined the mortality rate and raised the fertility rate. The demographers have predicted that the number of elderly people age 60 will exceed the number of children by the year 2047, and their population will grow from 841 million in 2013 to over 2 billion by the year 2050 (Ashiq, 2017). The aging issue is very common among developed countries, however, it is newer in developing countries, which has caused concerns for them (Itrat, 2007). Research studies indicate that most countries in the world experiencing rapid growth in the aging population. It is estimated that the continued pace of the older aged 65 years and above will rise to 1.4 billion by the year 2030 from 901 million in 2015. This changing demography would not only be a matter of concern of economy or policy strain for the world, but would raise issues like social support system, healthcare, and so on for the elderly people, where these needs are utmost necessary for their basic survival (Al-Rashid, 2021).

Analyzing the severity of the problem a discipline was launched as Gerontology “derived from the Greek word *geron*, which means the old person”. In this context, the discipline goes through the study of old persons (Macionis, 2008). Subjects besides studying physiological, social, psychological, and mental health and the diseases and issues that occur over time also apply knowledge to design policies and programs for the welfare of elderly people (Muhammad et al, 2009). The problem of the elderly has achieved a serious shape and has become complicated in modern times. Several problems have been caused, which need to be investigated thoroughly, otherwise, society may face dysfunction. It is further communicated that the society can function well only when both segments, the old and the young work properly and in a good relation (Sheykhi, 2006). The issue was first identified by the developed countries and gradually the developing countries also realized the situation. Consequently, the situation turned into a universal phenomenon (Ali & Kiani, 2003). The older cohort is more at the margin and vulnerable in the urban areas in terms of social inequality, isolation from daily social activities, exclusion from the family related affairs; no opportunity for entertainment, outings/excursions, or interaction with the neighbors, and deplorable physical health condition (Al-Rashid, 2021; Muhammad et al, 2009). In addition, the poverty and the fragile economic condition of the elderly doubled their troubles and minimized the possibility of recovering from the drop in income (Ali & Kiani, 2003; Church, Rock & Vermeulem, 2008).

The prevalence of mental illnesses among the Asian adults is ranging between 7.8% and 34.8%. Additionally, as the older population continues to increase the mental illnesses will rise subsequently. Depression which causes disability, poor health, decline in the quality of life, and quick risk to mortality, is mostly caused and associated with the negligence from the social support (Mohd, 2019). Viewing this demographic transition, it is necessary to launch assistance programs for elderly people to make them active and functioning members of society. Canada, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Portugal have

successful programs addressing this issue. "Active Living" by Alberta, Canada, "In Porto Life is Long" in Porto, Portugal, and "Wellness Project" in Terranova, Italy are prominent programs promoting healthy aging (Miranda, 2016).

Aging is a threatening issue. The Western world has prepared for this issue but the situation in the Asian countries is awful. As Asian countries traditionally rely on family-based support, so, in this context the issue has intensified due to urbanization, industrialization, migration, and most recently globalization which has changed the family structure (Chan, 2006). Several surveys by ASEAN (Association of South Asian Nations) concluded that most of the support for the elderly people comes from the household like from the children and grandchildren, however, the surveys predict that the nucleation of the family may create a vacuum in the joint family system that persists in Asia (Itrat, 2007). Similarly, in Pakistan, the joint family system is still very common. Old age is considered a symbol of wisdom and piety. The elders are given high respect. The cultural trait has been intensified by the strong religious values, which in turn dignify the status of elderly people (Ali & Kiani, 2003).

It is indeed an undeniable fact that senior citizens have contributed to the development of society in the youth. But at this time, they have no such comprehensive and potential international convention for women and children that could meet their rights (Dildar, Saeed & Sharjeela, 2012; Muhammad et al, 2009). However, on behalf of their unforgettable services rendered in different fields, the United Nations (UN) declared the 5th of October as International Older Persons Day across the globe to secure their rights (Muhammad et al, 2009). As the world is transforming from the joint family structures to the nuclear family system, old age people lose their status in terms of their traditional authority, familial support, and self-respect. In addition to this, they face maltreatment in the context of physical, psychological, emotional, financial, sexual, and material abuse, which consequently leads to physical injuries, depression, and anxiety when they share their hardships with others (Yasamy et al, 2013).

In the past old age persons had influential and high status in society because of their stable economic position, but when the modern trends entered their traditional role ended gradually. The economy and family authority shifted to the youth. These changing trends transformed the conventional ways of earning into modern formal institutions and professionalism, which ultimately lessened the dependence of children on their parents (Ali & Kiani, 2003). The situation results in discrepancies (Rahim & Tareen, 2022) which leads to threatening and beating the parents of their sons. The most common among them is verbal abuse, like passing harsh words, humiliating, and calling names. The youngsters often quarrel with their parents and give arguments in their daily interactions (Dildar & Saeed, 2012).

The majority of the old age population has one or more chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, etc. These diseases subsequently lead them to disabilities, depression, nutritional challenges, and physical functioning (Sabzwari & Azhar, 2010). For Cole and Dendukuri (2003) and Djernes (2004), physical factors are the most important factor responsible for causing geriatric depression. In old age, several health

problems accumulate, which adds up to the existing chronic ailments to become more worsen. One problem leads to another problem and complexing into a vicious cycle. This situation burdens the geriatric population, and these cumulative diseases lead ultimately toward lowering the quality of life (Borglin et al., 2005; Ganatra et al, 2008; Sharma, 2003).

Pakistan as a developing country is also affected by the frequent demographic transition of an increasing number of elderly people. According to the 1998 census, the population of the 60 years and above increased to 7.34 million as it was 2.92 million in 1961 (Birren, 1969; GoP, 1999), which indicates around three times increase in 35 years. It is further communicated that by the year 2030, it will touch the figure of 23.76 million, which will be 9.3 percent of the total population (Ashiq, 2017). The study further regrets that being an alarming issue the state has not taken it seriously, and no such policy has been devised. Some sporadic work has been done in Punjab and Sindh to accommodate the elderly people in welfare homes, however, their performance is not remarkable. On the other side, some NGOs like Ladies Fellowship, Pakistan Senior Citizens Association Karachi, Pakistan Association of Gerontology, and Association for the Welfare of the Retired Persons Islamabad have been established for the welfare of old age people, however, these organizations have not been succeeded to improve the health of the aged population because of financial and other limitations (Khalid, 2001). Though several Old Age Homes established Sabzwari and Azhar (2010) regret that these homes cannot adequately accommodate the huge number of elderly populations. The study further extends that some volunteer organizations or philanthropists are doing good by providing with free and valuable services to vulnerable and dependent elderly. However, it is not enough to pacify the mounting ailing and vulnerable old age persons.

Depression in old age people is a common illness and spreads rapidly in developing as well as in developing countries. In Pakistan, 22.9% of the elderly population faces depression (Cassum, 2014; Ganatra et al, 2008). The finding of a study conducted in Rawalpindi and Islamabad shows that the depression among the unemployed elderly is double that of the employed elderly population (Alam, 2016; Cassum, 2014). It is further indicated in the study that the World Health Organization (WHO) is alarmed that depression will remain the prominent cause of disability and cardiovascular disease. The intensity of depression is much greater than it is reported. Even it is higher than the USA. In Pakistan, the depression among elders is 66% while it is 40% in the USA (Cassum, 2014). The problem is serious, especially in the rural and vulnerable segments of the country like, in poor and some racial and ethnic groups (Alam, 2016; Ali & Kiani, 2003). Besides the mental illnesses, the elderly in Pakistan are also facing the undernutrition and malnutrition. A study outlines that most of the elderly don't have access to meat and are deprived of fresh fruits and vegetables, which are the potential ingredients for longevity, and the state has failed to provide them with such facilities (Sabzwari & Azhar, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The elderly is a prominent issue, especially in developing countries. To handle the problem, many theorists have worked on this. Some of the prominent theories are more important in dealing with the elderly age.

The activity theory of the elderly folk introduced by Cavan et al, and Havinghurst and Albrecht believe that activities in life may lead to a healthy life. It is further argued that the greater engagement and participation of elderly people in the community, society, and social role do increase life satisfaction and consequently greater well-being in older adulthood (Heinz, 2017).

The continuity theory about the elderly was first developed by Atchley. According to the theory older adults should continue and participate in previous works, roles, hobbies, and activities. The continuity theory is viewed from both internal and external viewpoints. Internally the elderly may be persuaded to continue and engage in the previous activities to achieve the sense of stability and security they provide and externally may have more to do with fulfilling expectations related to previous roles (Diggs, 2020; Heinz, 2017)

The disengagement theory of the elderly was presented by Cumming and Henry in 1961. As the name signifies in the disengagement theory people withdraw from their previous roles and activities in middle age and over. According to this theory, people withdraw normally and naturally from social roles and activities, besides this increasing preoccupation with self and reducing emotional involvement with others. This theory in turn against the activity and continuity theory (Schroots, 1996).

Method and Materials

This study is based upon the qualitative approach of the social research, where the data was collected from the Pashtun elderly people of Quetta with a focus on the thickly populated Pashtun-dominated area of Nawa kill. Pashtun in the area are passing through a transitional period in the sense that the youth are more educated and self-dependent and their parents are illiterate and mostly dependent. Due to different mentalities and engagements, the elderly are not given that much importance which they need in their lives. In the study, the sequential sampling technique of non-probability sampling was employed to fetch data from the informants. In which the size of the sample was left to the saturation of the data. In this way, the data was continued to be collected to get a saturation level. The saturation or repetition of data started on the 24th informant, however; four more informants were interviewed, and then the interview process. So, in the end, the total size of the sample remained 28 informants for this study. The informants were only male members of 60 years and above, and due to cultural restrictions, the females were not interviewed. The data was collected through an unstructured interview guide, where the data was collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs). The interview guide consisted of some personal and close-ended questions but the majority of the questions were topic-centered and open-ended to explore the issue deeply. The informants were mostly illiterate, however, some of them were less literate.

The data was then divided based on their themes and sub-themes, which were later interpreted understandably and easily.

Results and Findings

The study regarding the issues of elderly people in the Pashtun society of Balochistan consisted of old age persons of 60 years and above, where the majority of them were illiterate, however, a very small number were primary or middle pass only. Moreover, about 85% of the informants were living in joint families, and almost 80% of the informants were unemployed. The monthly income of the informants ranged between 00 to 40000 Pakistani rupees.

- Inquiring the informants regarding the general issues they are facing at this stage of the age. The informants during the interview process shared that no doubt they are facing many issues like social, psychological, emotional, recreational, nutrition, health care, economic, and so on. They further explained that the behavior and interactions of the children are not supportive of them. The children always remain at a distance from them, and try to prove them ignorant and conservative. They don't pay any attention to the advice of their parents and follow the ways that they want to be good. Some of the informants viewed that their children scolded them and used harsh words when they gave advice or interfered in their affairs.
- Regarding the family issues the elderly people were found very much complainant. Almost all of the informants viewed that the children are not giving much importance to their decisions except a very small number of the informants, who were identified as self-dependent economically. The majority of the informants expressed that their children don't consult with them when making any decision in the family. Some three of the informants shared desperately that "they are the king of the family; what they want they do". Almost all of the informants complained that they have fewer interactions with their young children because they always engage with their mobile. They don't share their daily activities and privacies with their parents. One of the informants viewed that "he meets with his sons after ten or twelve days while living in the same home, he is very much anxious".
- Based upon the information about the healthcare issues of the informants, it was identified that elderly people were not satisfied with what they were dealt with regarding their healthcare. The majority of the informants communicated that at this stage of age, a person becomes weak and vulnerable to diseases and they are needed frequent treatment and care, but the children are not sensitive and conscious about it, however, about 20% of the informants were found comparatively satisfied to some extent. Furthermore, about half of the informants desperately viewed that "due to rude and harsh behavior of their children they cannot show and share

their illness with their children". The informants in the majority explained frustratingly that during illness they need subsistence nutrition but that is very scant. Surprisingly, a huge number of the informants desired death due to the unavailability of healthcare and parenting emotions. In addition, more than 35% of the informants expressed that the ill-behavior of children has caused mental health issues in elderly people.

- Asking about the emotional and psychological issues in their families the informants were equally complainant. Almost all of the informants expressed that they have psychological and emotional issues. They viewed that the youth are always engaging with the mobile. They use their mobile till late at night and then sleep till noon. Love, affection, and emotions which are the binding force and need have reached the bottom. Upon scolding them about 30% of the informants communicated that they came on reaction. In the same way, about 55% of the informants said they have tried now to deter their children from using mobile too much. The informants furthermore explained that this ill-support of the children has produced psychological issues. They think and re-call those days when they were expecting their children will be supportive of them. About 40% of the informants viewed that they don't think that their sons are their sons in the real sense.
- Regarding social issues faced in the community, the old age cohort was found critical of the behavior of the people. They equally criticized the behavior and attitudes of the people especially of the youth for showing ill manners and for being ill-cultured. They expressed that the youth are moving away from religion, which is a source of morality and hence they are unethical and misbehaved. The informants in the majority agreed that youngsters are much inclined to Western culture, which is vulgar and immoral. Furthermore, almost 90% of the informants complained that the youth especially consider them conservative and outdated, and give no importance to their views and experiences. The informants remember their old days when they respected their elders, showed decent manners, and served the old age people, but they lamented that today's youngsters are immodest and lack ethical sense. In the interview process, more than half of the informants desperately viewed their lives are not less than a curse in the family in particular and in society in general.
- Responding to the economic issues the elders face in their daily lives, about 75% of the informants especially those who were dependent on their sons expressed that their economic position is very much bad. They explained further that they are completely dependent on their children and the children don't provide them with the amount that they need for their subsistence. Moreover, the same percentage of the informants while different informants argued that money is the topmost need of any

individual for his/her basic happy life and even survival, however, when there is no money, a healthy and happy life spending is a dream. Informants in almost 80% viewed that the youth or children are spending money unthoughtfully for themselves, but while giving money to their parents they ask a million questions, which is indeed very embarrassing.

Discussion

Elderly people have many issues in Quetta Pakistan. These issues are diversified like familial, social, psychological, mental, emotional, economic, health care, recreational, and so on. In the study, it was identified that the elders are not given that much importance within the family and time which they need. Their suggestions and inputs are devalued. The interaction of the children is not positive and paying no attention to their advice and even in some cases the children come in reaction and use harsh words. Similarly, old age persons were found more desperate in terms of care regarding healthcare. They complained of the young members of the family that they are reluctant to give them proper time and carry them to doctors when they need treatment. It was further noted that many times the parents could not share their illness with their children because of the rude response of the children. The elders are not provided proper diet. Moreover, they were found they be not socially treated as respected. In the study, it was noticed that the elderly complained of the younger as ill-mannered and de-cultured. They labeled the youth as unprincipled and disrespectful. They are moving from the religion. The study additionally identified that the old cohort was psychologically and emotionally disturbed. They frustratingly viewed that they don't get positive and supportive responses from their children. The youth always engage with mobiles sparing no time for their parents. The study noted moreover that the old age persons were economically insecure. The children don't provide them with the money they need for their survival or other needs.

Conclusion

The elderly is a big issue of the modern age especially in societies that are transmitting from a traditional life course to a rational life course. The Pashtun society in Quetta is on the verge of this phase. So, the situation resultantly turns to maladjustment of the elderly cohort in this scenario. Subsequently, they face multifaced problems regarding their health, family life, social life, economy, emotions, psychology, and so on. These problems have made them truly frustrated and disappointed. The developed countries have farmed strategies and have accommodated the elderly people in a sophisticated way, but in developing countries like Pakistan, it has not been envisaged an issue to be viewed keenly and seriously. Consequently, in Balochistan, the provincial government has not structured policies and no practical steps have been taken so far. There is only one old age home, which is reserved for elderly women, which is also out of basic facilities. In this regard, the government should farm strategies and think seriously about the issue to tackle the problem immediately. In addition, there is a need to organize

sessions and seminars by different government and non-governmental organizations to highlight the issue and create awareness among the people. Besides this, the problem should be focused on in all social, political, religious, and educational forums, because the elderly are an integral part of our society. The people should treat them in a better way and ensure their dignity and honor.

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