

A STUDY ON CERTAIN FACTORS IMPACT ON LONELINESS AMONG RETIRED MEN AND WOMEN

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Abstract

The study was designed to explore the relationship of some socio-demographic factors and social system with perceived loneliness among retired men and women. A sample of 320 men and women in the age-range 60-75 years were administered perceived loneliness scale and personal information schedule individually. Results showed positive significant relationship of perceived loneliness level with age, gender, locale, marital status of the retired elderly people. The intensity of perceived loneliness increased as a matter of reduced social support and intergenerational solidarity.

Key words : Perceived loneliness, Retirement, Socio-demographic variables, Social Support, Community interventions

Introduction

Retirement is one of the important areas of research in the field of Gero-Psychology. Retirement is a condition in which an individual is forced to give up his/ her job and the income is declined, at least in part from a retirement pension earned through previous years of service as a job holder. Retirement thus refers primarily to the final phase of the occupational life cycle. It refers to the period following a career of employment in which occupational responsibilities and often opportunities are at a minimum and in which economic where with all comes at least in part by virtue of past occupational efforts. It changes the individual involving a major change in life style and various socio-psychological and economic deficits. i.e. multidimensional in nature. The socio-psychological losses are lose of loved one and significant figures (i.e.; friends, children, spouse) isolation, loneliness and uprooting, status-loss, prestige-lose, economic-loss; retirement from active to inactive and problem of leisure time, cultural devaluation, sense of uselessness, alienation and segregation (Suzanne, Richard, Luson, Peterson, 1962; Sati 1988; Renu and Chadha; 1994 ; Saraswati , 1991).

Rational of the Study

In experiencing ageing changes loneliness is one of the major psychological problems faced by elderly caused either by emotional or social deficits. In general parlance loneliness is conceived as a psychological condition that arises as the product of complex interrelationship between losses in the individuals support system, decreased participation in social activities

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and a diminished sense of social fulfillment (Jha,2001). Loneliness may be a frequent reaction to the major crises of old age such as widowhood, late life marital and special problems, retirement, sensory loss, aging, diseased, pain, institutionalization, dying housing and poor self-perceived health (Koropeczyi-cox, 1998; Fees et.al,1999). Indian researchers state that many people develop pre-retirement anxiety and worry which may lead to considerable maladjustment (Bhatia, 1983; Chakravarthy, 1992, 1995; Hussain and Singh, 1994) and loneliness and alienation caused by loss of contemporary networks out group treatment, lack of friends, caregivers etc. (Jamuna & Lalitha, 2004). Surrender, et. al.(2003). in their study indicate that elderly face health and economic problems, which affect their mental health and well being. In general health and financial problems are most among the present day elderly (Batra,2004). In a study Lakshminarayan and Prithvi Kashini (2005) found that elders who suffered from health and financial problems felt lonelier. Ravi Sidhu (2006) in her study opined that the aged were likely to experience loneliness because of their shrinking social network. The entry of women in the workforce had further aggravated the condition. She found that loneliness among females was also significantly related to health, emotional and financial adjustment of both males and females. In a recent study Goswamee (2009) revealed that the elderly face a number of psychological and adjustment problems and as a result adjust to those problems in different ways i.e. to become a part of old –age homes and other sorts of out of family institution.

Thus it is evident that health and financial problems along with loneliness are common among the elderly and have to be given due consideration.

Statement of the Problem

The present study may be stated as follows “A Study on Certain Socio-Demographic Factors Impact on Loneliness among Retired Men and Women in Ballari District.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were framed in the present study

- To study the certain factors associated on Loneliness among retired men and women.
- To know the different groups of social support on Loneliness among retired men and women.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following are the hypotheses of the study as follows.

- ❖ There is no significant difference in the mean scores of loneliness among retired men and women.
- ❖ There is no significant positive correlation between dimensions of loneliness among retired men and women.

Methodology

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the association of some socio-demographic factors, viz; age, gender, locale, marital status with perceived loneliness. Present study is a descriptive type method was followed.

Sample

A sample of 320 retired men and women from different occupational areas in government and private sectors residing at Ballari district and the villages in its vicinity of

Karnataka state was drawn on the basis of personal contact and from the records of the different schools, colleges under the jurisdiction of Ballari district. There age range was between 60-75 years. The distribution of sample is as under the table -1.

Table-1: Distribution of Sample

Age Group	Men		Women	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
60-68	40	40	40	40
69-75	40	40	40	40
Total	80	80	80	80
Grand Total	160		160	

Tools

Following tools were administered for data collection

1. **Perceived Loneliness Scale** : Having conceptualized loneliness as an uni-dimensional psychological state of an individual. Perceived loneliness scale (L-scale) developed by Jha,P.K(1997) in English as a Standardized and comprehensive inventory was used to measure the extent of loneliness; quite suitable for Indian sample.
2. **Personal Information Schedule (PIS)**
A personal information schedules was prepared relating to the information about social support, physical and mental health and their involvement in physical and mental activities of the subjects.

Statistical Techniques Employed

Data collected by administering the tools individually to the respondents were interpreted with the help of t-ratio, correlations, mean and SD were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

The results on the loneliness score of the subjects were analyzed in terms of age, gender, marital status and locale.

Table-2: Loneliness Score and Significance of Difference in different Sub-group

Sl. No	Groups		N	Mean	S.D	t-ratio
1	Age	62-68(Young retiree)	160	9.21	3.14	13.17**
		69-75(Old retiree)	160	14.11	3.62	
2	Gender	Men	160	11.12	7.51	2.62**
		Women	160	9.43	6.41	
3	Local	Rural	160	13.79	8.81	8.16**
		Urban	160	8.12	3.76	
4	Marital Status	Spouse –Living	192	13.86	9.13	6.66**
		Spouse –Not Living	128	8.59	3.78	

*P<0.05 level; **P<0.01 level

The reported feelings of loneliness were higher in the old –retired group (M=14.11) than young retired group (M=9.21) and the obtained t-ratio was significant (t=13.17). The extent of wellbeing was related to certain mental and physical factors such as a feeling of steering one's own life and the ability to cope well with suffering combined with regular social and physical activities.

Many respondents reported that they felt isolated and ignored and had a need for more social engagements. Within the family they hardly found any listeners. The nature and severity

of various life situations differently determine the degree of loneliness. As age advanced there would be decrease in quantity and quality of personal and social contacts among the aged. Yet, age alone might not be an important factor in predicting loneliness but it was what happened to an individual especially in the socio-familial fabric.

The gender wise comparison showed that men experienced higher degree of loneliness as compared with women. The locality-wise differences were significant ($t=8.16; <0.01$ level). The rural elderly felt more lonely than urban elderly. The obtained t-ratio 6.66 was also significant in terms of marital status. The elderly without spouses felt higher degree of loneliness in comparison to the elderly living with spouses.

Certain ecological factors as reported by the respondent, i.e., reduced social activities, lack of opportunity to interact with younger members and their peers and poor oppression towards future and to certain extent reduced income may cause the level of perceived loneliness. In the family system in rural areas there was a greater chance of the elderly living together with their children than in urban areas. Despite the family type and type of housing; due to high probability of bereavement and isolation, elderly were more prone to loneliness. General assumption showed that loneliness occurred particularly among women because most of them lost their partners and depended on children. This cause limited opportunities of contact. In addition, for some elderly people and psychological detachment might cause feeling of loneliness. One of the most common causes of loneliness in old age was loss of spouse. The loss of spouse became a relation deficit that deprived the individual of vital support pertinent to give meaning and purpose to life; might act as causal agent in the onset of loneliness (Das, 1993; Jamuna, 1992; Ramamurthy and Jamuna, 1991). The result of the study supported the research evidence that loneliness was associated with widowhood, self-related health, low participated in organized social activities and being female. Individuals might have many relatives, and yet feel lonely if there was no subjective feeling of intimacy (Jamuna, 1992).

Table-3: Social Support and Perceived Loneliness

Sl.No.	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-Value
1	HLG	100	52.38	18.89	4.29**
2	LLG	100	60.35	16.99	

** $p>0.01$ level (HLG = High Level Group, LLG= Low Level Group)

Table- 4 : Psychological Correlates of Loneliness Correlations

Loneliness	SRPH	SRMH	SS	PMA
	0.331	0.379	-0.283	-0.249

(SRPH = Self Reported Physical Health, SRMH = Self Reported Mental Health, SS = Social Support, PMA = Physical and Mental Activity)

In addition two groups of high and low lonely elderly subjects consisting of 100 subjects in each group were indentified on the basis of Q3 and Q1 to see the effect of the perception of social support on their mental health and well-being. It was assumed that in later life when the nature and extent of social support decreased due to the death of spouse, friends, deficit in interpersonal relationship due to physical difficulties and family resources might be related to the wellbeing and mental health of the elderly people. Although Bentsen and Harootyan (1994) provided the means for examining relationship among adult family members, very few researchers had investigated long- term intergenerational relationship and their effort on loneliness. Therefore studies in this direction were thought to be necessary to draw more insight

into the problem of perceived loneliness in later life span when social network was decreased. Results in this respect showed that in Indian social Set-up loneliness was found to be high among the elderly who perceived poor social support, poor self reported physical and mental activities. Therefore, it was deduced that elderly experienced more loneliness because their spouses might be deceased, their friends might have either moved away or died, their children might be in distant place or on account of physical disability.

Under the circumstances it is high time to evolve the maxim of “Productive ages”, So that the retired old persons are empowered and can live with dignity and social support by way of utilization of their resources in the following ways.

- i) Identification of active elderly their qualifications, skills and experiences be utilized in nation building.
- ii) To assess their willingness to participate in the community development programmed.
- iii) They can be motivated to develop programmed their needs and potential to upkeep their self-identity in the mainstream of the society so that their worth may be identified and they may prove themselves as one of the viable member of the society.

Conclusion

Thus the study showed that the perceived loneliness among the retired elderly people was associated with age, gender, locale; marital status, social system, intergenerational solidarity and community based intervention strategies may help the elderly to cope well with their state of loneliness. Here one should make up one's mind that retirement is an event of non – employment and not a condition of unemployment. It is a final phase of the occupational life cycle. So, looking at retirement as a social roles means on the rights, duties and relationships associated with the position of “retired person”, there is wide spread agreement concerning what kind of social commitments are expected from retired people. The rights of retired person include the right to economic support without holding a job; the right to autonomy concerning the management of one's time. Therefore we hold the belief that the retired elderly people are useless when they do not be considered only as a problem rather than a resource for the well – being of the family, social development, education, health care and other services.

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