



AGEING ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

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INTRODUCTION:

Graying population is one of the most significant characteristics of the 20th century and quite often the first quarter of the 21st century is known as “the age of ageing”. The Indian aged population is currently the second largest in the world. The absolute number of the over 60 population in India is expected to increase from 76 million in 2001 to 136-137 million by 2021. In most gerontological literature, people above 60 years of age are considered as ‘old’ and as constituting the ‘elderly’ segment of the population. Age is an important dimension of social organization because the divisions of life-cycle is those prescribed by the culture of a society in order to lend stability and pre-disability to the typical sequence of life events, Implied in this arrangement is the idea that individuals also undergo a change in behavior as they pass from one stage of life into a subsequent stage. Infants, children, young, adult, middle-aged adults and older persons are all expected by other people to behave in a manner characteristic of their age groups, social judgments of their maturity depend on how closely they behavior approximates the corresponding age related norm. Furthermore, at each stage of life, a person takes on new social roles and the responsibilities that accrue to those roles, and the persons’ status and relationships with other people are modified accordingly.

In the traditional Indian culture, a human life span is one hundred years. Manu, the ancient lawgiver, in his Dharmasastra divided this span of life into four ‘ashrams’ or life stages viz, Brahmacharya, Grahastha, Vanaprashtha and Sanyasa. When a man’s head turned gray and wrinkles appeared, he was to give up this life of a householder and turn to ‘vanaprashtha’, which literally means moving into the forest. A mature and ageing man gradually give up his worldly pursuits, move away from the

mundane routine of householder and turn inward in search of spiritual growth. When he was spiritually ready, he would renounce the world completely and enter the stage of 'sasyasa' or asceticism.

Considering a more contemporary scenario, it was considered the duty of the son to respect and care for his parents. Even today, in India, old parents live with their son/s and their families, being the most common living arrangement. Indian society is patriarchal and after marriage, the son brings his wife to the parental household to live. This tradition assured that old people would have younger in-laws and grandchildren to care for them. The religion, caste groups, and the caste Panchayat system looked after the welfare of the aged. With no family too, the elderly were protected, respected and taken care of even when they did not own property or assets. With these conditions, the age was respected, comfortable and socially useful, and contributed immensely in terms of wealth, experience, guidance, knowledge etc.

However, the increasing processes of industrialization, modernization and urbanization have had a negative impact on the traditional welfare institutions and higher socio-cultural values (Mishra 1979:170). These processes have resulted in deterioration of joint families, out-migration of children in search of jobs, growing consumerism and communication facilities, etc. The absence of higher socio-cultural values has given way to a materialistic approach, individualism, selfishness, etc., and thereby the life of an elderly became vulnerable. (Arora, 1993; and Sonar, 2004)

It is no wonder that several researches done on the attitudes of the aged on various issues and on attitudes of society towards them look at old age as a period characterized by economic insecurity, poor health, loneliness, resistance to change and indifferent feelings towards physical and mental powers, that a vast majority of the aged have a fear of death etc.

On the contrary, several researches have also shown that old age is not a crisis because it does not always imply a loss of status, respect, health and job opportunity and that reaching old age or post-retirement provides greater freedom and flexibility, a respite from tight schedules and a time to reorganize one's life and interests (Goode, 1977:453).

The purpose of this research is to examine the positive social aspects of the aging experience, complying with the latter group of researches made.

Growing old is not simply a biological process; it is also a social and psychological phenomenon that involves important changes in the aging person's perceptions, social roles, self-concept, behavior and approach toward daily living.

So what a wonderful surprise to find that the elderly are so happy! Perhaps this is partly because the lives of the elderly are less stressful and laden with responsibility. They're free of the struggle to succeed in their careers, and of the emotional and financial struggles of parenthood. In old age 'individuals learn to adapt to their strengths and weaknesses, and in mid-life quell their infeasible aspirations.'

In fact, the happiness of old age is a good illustration of the fallacy of our culture's normal view of happiness. We fear old age because we see it as a process of loss, of having to let go of things which we depend on for our well-being. But it's this very process which actually causes the well-being of our later years

SOCIAL THEORIES OF AGING:

Theories specify relationships between concepts and provide a framework for explaining why certain things happen the way they do. When it comes to the social aspects of aging, no single theoretical approach is dominant. Social gerontology is a relatively new field that marks its beginning in the late 1940s. The development and testing of theoretical statements have largely taken place only since the 1960s. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of theoretical work has been accomplished, and several viewpoints have emerged to provide the field with a variety of theories and a solid foundation for the future.

THE STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE:

Structural – functionalism, often called simply functionalism, portrays society as a self – regulating system made up of interdependent parts operating together to generate stability and social order. The components of this system consist of various social institutions such as religion, the family, medicine, the economic system, politics, and the like, which function to maintain society in a state of harmonious balance or equilibrium. Because functionalist theorists perceive the social system as composed of these various interconnected parts, social changes, decisions, and events that take place in one part of the system inevitably affect to some degree all other parts of the system. What makes social

possible is the expectation that people will typically behave in accordance with the norms and values common to their particular social system. This process is 'functional' because it results in social harmony and counterbalances dysfunctional processes, like crime and mental illness that disrupt the social order. Functionalist theory thus provides a view of society that emphasizes stability, integration, and order.

Functionalism was a dominant theoretical perspective in sociology until the late 1960s, when its influence was significantly curtailed. Conflict theorists (Dahrendorf 1959), whose intellectual root are in Marxist theory, argued that functionalism was too conservative in its emphasis upon stability and order. Conflict theorists insisted that functionalism failed to explain adequately such important processes in society as social change, conflict, and alienation. Symbolic interactionists (Blumer 1969), whose focus is upon small-group processes, objected to the functionalist view that individual human behavior is largely determined by society. These theorists claimed that human beings determine their own behavior by defining their particular social situation and acting on the basis of that definition, instead of always acting in a certain way simply because society requires it. Functionalist theory, in their view, needed to give more credit to the individual's ability to think and decide on his or her own course of behavior.

ACTIVITY THEORY:

There is research that supports the basic propositions offered by activity theory. In a longitudinal study carried out at Duke University over a ten-year period. Erdman Palmore (1968, 1969) found that older men tended to show almost no overall reduction in their activities or in life satisfaction, whereas older women tended to have a small but statistically significant reduction in both activities and life satisfaction. Temporary decreases in activities due to illness were usually followed by subsequent increases so that there was little or no overall change.

What activity theory essentially tells us is that most people do not disengage from society when they become old. If they do retire from their occupation role, they compensate for it by substituting some other type of activity that provides satisfaction. Bernice Neugarten (1971), for example, cites the case of a 75-year-old schoolteacher who made the most money of his life

selling insurance after retirement. This is not to forecast, however, that most elderly persons seek a second career, but rather that they are likely to remain active in some fashion if their past lives were characterized by being active.

Another important perspective on aging is continuity theory, which posits that a person's personality in old age is generally consistent with his or her personality when younger. That is, elderly people typically retain the same overall personality they had earlier in their adult life; they are simply older. Although disengagement theory explains tendencies toward disengagement in old age and activity theory shows us the merits of being active when elderly, continuity theory indicates that personality is little changed, if at all, by the aging process. Each of these theories explains a selected aspect of aging. Two other approaches, age stratification theory and modernization theory, apply a broader interpretation to the aging experience. Age stratification theory, a relatively complex theoretical concept of aging, provides a method for analyzing age cohorts as they pass through the life course. People are seen as generations filling the same or similar roles of the cohorts in front of them who have passed on to another stage, yet are different from other generations because of different historical events and experiences. Modernization theory, in turn, explains how old people typically occupy valued statuses and roles in developing societies, but become devalued as the process of industrialization and modernization favors the skills and energies of the young.

These theoretical perspectives represent important contributions to understanding social factor influencing aging. Other, more general, theoretical approaches in sociology- such as conflict theory (which can explain how the elderly function as a particular interest group in competition with other interest groups for social resources) and symbolic interaction theory (which can contribute knowledge concerning the development of self-concepts and small-group interaction in old age)-have been underutilized to date. But each has considerable potential for theory construction in social gerontology. In sum, significant theoretical concepts have been made, but more remains to be done.

As the world moves into the twenty-first century, the various nations on the globe will become increasingly concerned with old-age policy. Efforts to hold down the cost of health care and pensions for elderly are not likely to be successful as the aged population expands. Therefore, although the elderly are

headed toward a more positive life situation in the future, as compared with past generations of old people, their large numbers will require considerably more resources than were required previously. A major political challenge today is to prepare to meet the health, social, and financial needs of the elderly now and in the coming future. Exceptionally large populations of senior citizens will be a reality in the twenty-first century.

In old age, a large number of the psychological attachments which normally support our sense of identity fall away. One of the major ones is the attachment to hopes and ambitions. At the end of their working lives, knowing that they may not have many years left, old people stop imagining alternative futures for themselves. They stop striving to become something else, and begin to accept themselves and their lives as they are. Rather than living for the future, they become more present-centered. In addition, they're likely to lose their attachment to their appearance, to become free of the pressure to 'look good' and to stop using their looks as a way of seeking affirmation. They're also forced to give up their attachment to our careers, along with the status and identity they gave. And now that their children have left home, they're forced to give up their role as parent-careers too.

Gerontologists have recognized the very different conditions that people experience as they grow older within the years defined as old age. In developed countries, most people in their 60s and early 70s are still fit, active, and able to care for themselves. However, after 75, they will become increasingly frail, a condition marked by serious mental and physical debilitation.

The Aged As A Social Force:

In the twenty-first century, the elderly will be a more important and powerful segment of society than ever before because of their large number, longevity, experience with the social system, and enhanced levels of health, education, and income.

Senior citizen's groups are organized throughout the country and are set up to provide various services, such as social activities, recreational opportunities, and helping with household duties, and securing the delivery of health service. The future of aging on the world appears to be generally positive. Good health and relatively high standards of living are not only possible but probable for the majority of elderly people in technologically developed societies.

Although old age remains a period that many, perhaps most, people wish to avoid, it simply isn't possible to do so. Consequently, the optimal strategy for the individual is to approach old age with the idea of enjoying and finding personal satisfaction in the final stage of life. Current social policies are oriented toward providing a basic level of financial support and enhancing the quality of life through social programs in old age. There are no signs that these policies will be changed. Rather, national commitments to the aged are evident in governmental decisions throughout the world.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY:

Old people today differ markedly from the aged of earlier periods in that they are more healthy, alert, vigorous and younger in outlook. Despite the fact that a majority of aging persons are not sick, lonely, poor, insecure or mentally deficient, some of them are and contribute to the negative stereotype of the elderly that results from this situation. This negative labeling and stigmatization of the elderly contributes to behavior that actually confirms the prevalent stereotypes of old age and may even lead to lower self-esteem and diminished feelings of control among them.

The significance of this study is primarily to focus on diminishing, as much as possible, the effects of the negative stereotyping and labeling of the life of the elderly through data collected of respondents of their family background, economic status, health conditions and their involvement in social work. The research conducted, observations made and the inferences drawn thereby, compel us to ask pertinent questions about the prevalence of these negative stereotypes, the magnitude in which it is perceived to be around the aged in India and look at the positive side of ageing.

. The retired people are the assets of society. They have the wealth of knowledge and experience with them. Nothing is impossible in the world, if we combine the experience of older people and the power of youth to achieve the set goal. The attempt has been made to understand daily activities, lifestyle, friend circle, psychological difficulties, family support, social status and mental satisfaction in daily life of the retired old people.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1) To know the family background of retired old people.
- 2) To examine the economic and health conditions of retired old people.

- 3) To study their social life.

HYPOTHESES RELATED TO THE STUDY:

- 1) Retired old people are economically secure.
- 2) They enjoy their life satisfactorily and sufficiently.

SELECTION OF THE RESPONDENTS:

The study is based on retired old people from various walks of life in Kolhapur city which is a district place. The samples selected for the study consist of twenty retired male and twenty retired female respondents. The purposive random sampling method was used for the research. The collected information has been put in different tables. On the basis of finding some suggestions have been made.

RESOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION:

- 1) **Primary Data:** Primary data collected with the help of structured questionnaire and asked the respondents to fill up and return.
- 2) **Secondary Data:** Secondary data were collected through magazines, newspapers, internet, some documents etc.
- 3) **Observation:** Observation method was also used while discussing with respondents for additional information.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The area of study is limited to the Kolhapur city only and respondents belong only within the age group of 60 to 84 years and those who get a pension.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Attitude of Retirees and Society: Several researches are explained about the attitudes of the retirees' issues and attitude of society towards them.

- 1) Work satisfaction necessitates preretirement planning for those having different work – retirement attitude (Goudy, Powers and Keith 1975 : 267 – 279)
- 2) People with satisfaction in retirement are more likely to have favorable attitudes towards retirement than others.
- 3) Husbands look forward to retirement more than their wives do (Kereehhoff 1972 : 312 -328.
- 4) Feeling about oneself as young, healthy and effective are stronger determinants of favorable attitude toward retirement than the perceptions of the of the job (Eden and Jacobson 1976 : 145 – 154).

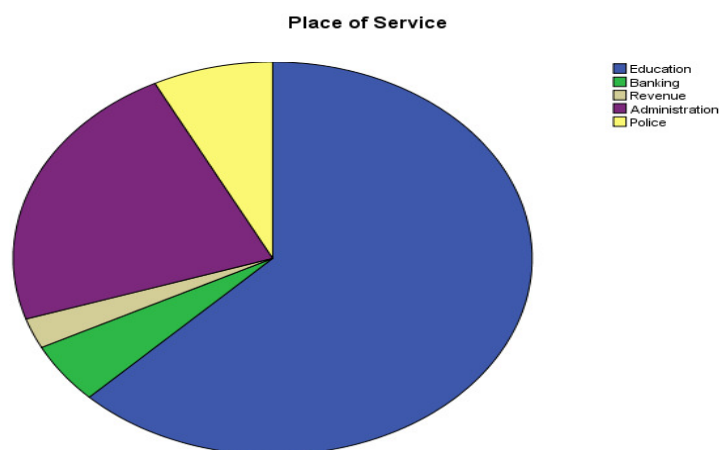
- 5) Of worth have no greater problem than they did at their younger age (Keily, Dudek and Stephaine 1977 : 181 – 184).

A review of the research literature shows that a few older studies (Mason 1954; Rosow 1967) found low feeling of self-worth and well-being among the aged. However, the bulk of research indicates that the elderly have a generally positive impression of themselves. Three principal areas of life among the aged were examined: 1) fully satisfied 2) economically sound 3) living healthy. As a result of this data I was able to construct major types of personalities, common to the aged: 1) integrated, 2) defended, 3) passive-dependent, and 4) disintegrated.

DATA INTERPRETATION:

Table No.1: Distribution of the retired employees, according to the Department in which they worked.

Dept. Where they worked	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Education	25	62.5	62.5	62.5
Banking	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
Administration	10	22.5	22.5	22.5
Police	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
Total	40	100.0	100.0	100.0



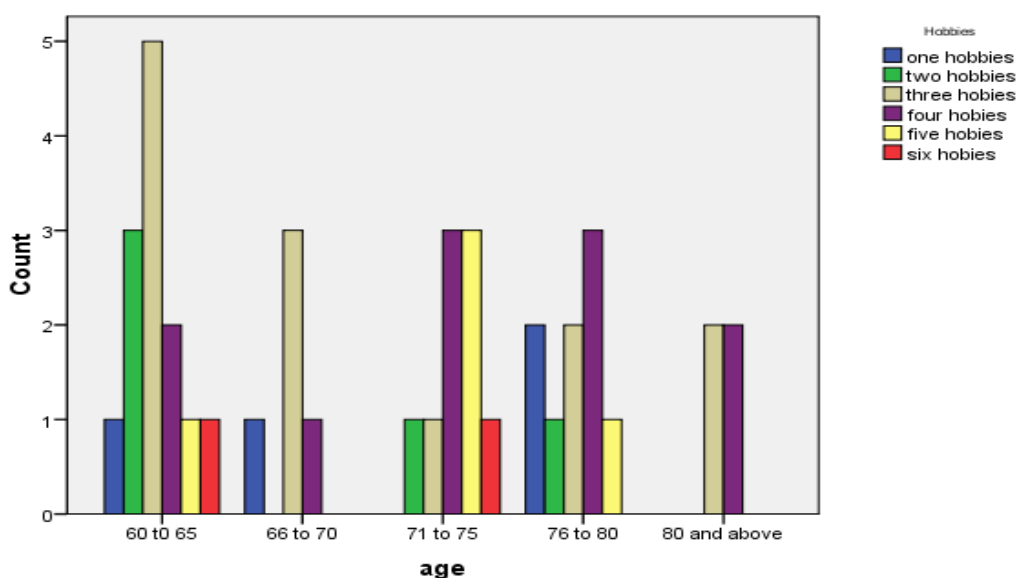
The above table shows that majority of the respondents are from the educational field and held positions as primary, high school, secondary, higher secondary and college teachers. 1/3rd of the retired people are from government administration department, working in revenue department and as municipal corporation officials. 3 retired persons are from the police department and only 2

people are from the banking field. Therefore, it is clear that the majority of the retired persons are from educational department.

Table No.2 Distribution of the retired people according to their age group and hobbies.

Age Group	Number of Hobbies						Total
	One Hobbies	Two Hobbies	Three Hobbies	Four Hobbies	Five Hobbies	Six Hobbies	
60 to 65	1	3	5	2	1	1	13
66 to 70	1	0	3	1	0	0	5
71 to 75	0	1	1	3	3	1	9
76 to 80	2	1	2	3	1	0	9
80 and above	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
Total	4	5	13	11	5	2	40

Bar Chart



Aging, to many, is a form of a blessing. It is an opportunity to live life more enthusiastically than in the previous, more tedious stages of life. After retirement one can fulfill one's dreams for one gets enough time, which couldn't be fulfilled before.

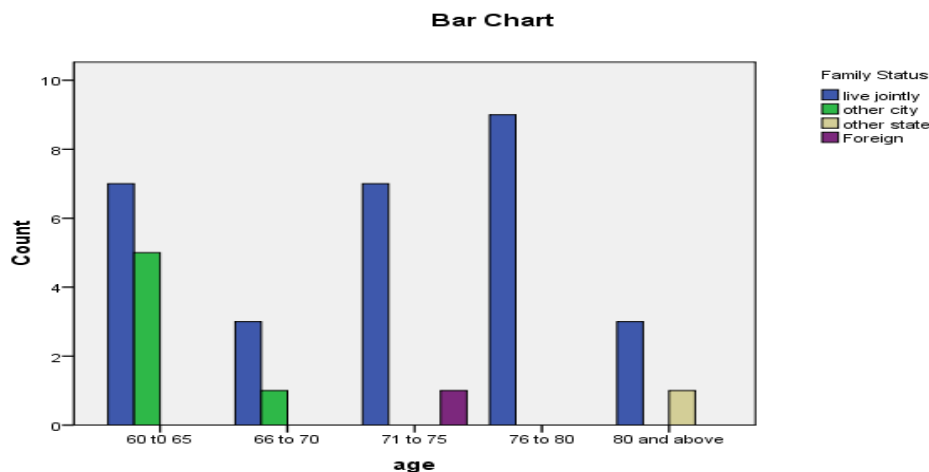
As an important part of the research, a questionnaire circulated among the respondents asked them about the type and number of hobbies that they follow, post retirement. Reading, taking morning and evening strolls, travelling

to places of their fancy, participating in religious activities, being actively involved in social work, watching movies and theatrical plays were some of their common responses.

Reading turned out to be the most popular hobby among the respondents as majority of them belonged to the educational field. Compact schedules and demanding workload had kept them from pursuing their love for reading. Lot of free time, economic security accumulated over the years made travelling the second popular hobby among respondents.

Table No. 3: Distribution of respondents according to their age group and family status

Age Group	Family Status			Total
	Joint family	Spouse	Single	
60 to 65	5	6	2	13
66 to 70	1	4	0	5
71 to 75	7	3	0	10
76 to 80	4	2	1	7
80 and above	3	1	1	5
Total	20	16	4	40



The above table highlights the age and the family status of the respondents studied; that is whether they stay in a joint family, with their spouse only or lead singular lives.

The study reveals that majority of the respondents live in a joint family, with their children and grandchildren, thereby promoting the maintenance of

close ties between themselves and their offspring, highlighting mutual affection although with some degree of dependence.

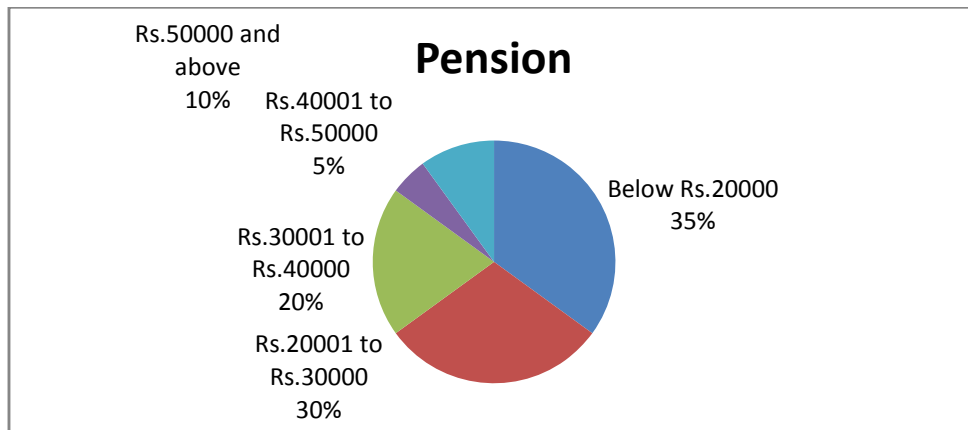
A little less than half the number of respondents live with their spouse. Post-retirement, especially for couples who previously worked, the presence of their spouse is of utmost significance. Most respondents regret not having spent quality time with their spouse owing to their stressful and demanding work-life and familial responsibilities; another reason why one couple interviewed regarded their old age as the beginning of the “golden period” of their life.

4 respondents live alone and have chosen to do so because this arrangement means to them, a reduction in any possible mental tensions as it gives them minimal to no scope of associating with anyone. Stable socio-economic conditions, independence in socio-economic matters, economic help to near relatives, making a will to pass on property to chosen heir and demand for support in all social and health crises from the chosen heir and intense interaction with his/her family in turn guaranteeing their social, mental and physical well-being are other factors why the 4 respondents have chosen to live stable and happy lives alone.

7 of the respondents living in joint families belong to the age group of 71-75. On the other hand, 6 respondents, living with their spouse, belong to the age group of 60-65.

Table No 4. Distribution of the retired person according to Pension Amount.

Pension amount	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Below Rs.20000	14	35.0	35.0	35.0
Rs.20001 to Rs.30000	12	30.0	30.0	65.0
Rs.30001 to Rs.40000	8	20.0	20.0	85.0
Rs.40001 to Rs.50000	2	5.0	5.0	90.0
Rs.50000 and above	4	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

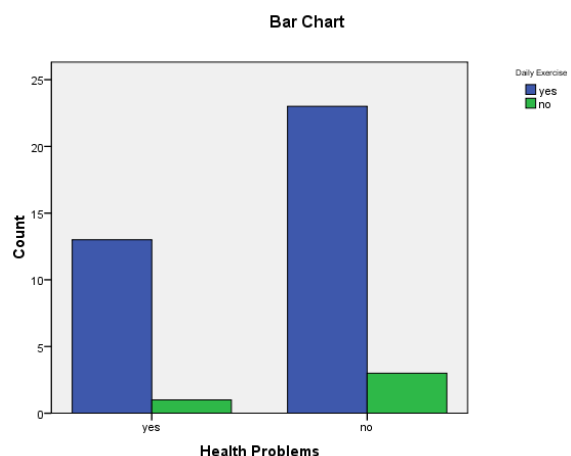


The above table helps to illustrate the financial conditions of the respondents. Majority of them; that is about 35% receive up to 20000 INR per month as pension. Another majority, forming 30% of the pensioners studied; have an income ranging between 20,000 to 30,000 INR on a monthly basis. A sizeable 20% of retirees receive amounts between 30,000 and 40,000 INR as pension per month and around 5% respondents earn between 40,000 to 50,000 INR per month. A good 10% of retirees earn more than 50,000 INR monthly.

The above data clearly highlights the stable economic conditions of the respondents. In the questionnaire circulated, all the respondents said that they were content with the pension amount they received per month.

Table No. 5: Distribution of the Respondent according to their Daily Exercise and Health problems.

Health Problems	Daily Exercise		Total
	Yes	No	
<i>Yes</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>26</i>
Total	36	4	40



The above table seeks to establish the relationship between health of the respondents and daily exercises they perform.

26(65%) respondents said that they are doing necessary exercise everyday and they don't face any major health problems where as 14 respondents are doing exercise every day and they face only minor, miscellaneous and vague health problems generally associated with old age such as joint pains, constipation, avitaminosis, neuralgia etc.

Daily exercise activities that the respondents said to be carrying out include walking, yoga, meditation, spending time at Laughter Clubs etc.

What is behind this trend is the fact that the world's population of old people, those 65 years of age and over, is increasing to levels never before attained in human history. The twenty-first century will be the first period of human existence when one out of every five persons is likely to be age 65 or over.

Following are 5 case studies to aptly demonstrate why the aged are an important social force in the present times, and will be, in the years to come.

1. Among the respondents interviewed, special mention needs to be given to Shri Y.N.Patil. At the age of 83, he remains to be extremely enthusiastic, a quality that is well reflected in his noteworthy contributions to society. Mr. Patil has been a notable crusader in the Senior Citizen Movement ever since he joined the Rajarshi Shahu Organization for the Elderly in 1995. Ever since, the organization has shown manifold increase in its membership. Mr. Patil has played a major role in shaping the movement for the Federation of Senior Citizen's Organization. He has always been a prominent figure in helping solve the members' socio-economic, familial, health-related problems, on behalf of the organization. Mr. Patil has also conducted an extensive study on the status of the elderly in the state of Maharashtra. He continues to struggle relentlessly for the rights of senior citizens. It is for these honorary contributions of Mr. Patil that he was honored by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee on the eve of "Senior Citizen's Day" on 1st October, 2015.
2. Dr. Bhosle is the second subject of our case-study series. He reflects the enthusiasm and vigour of a 20 year old; such is the stature and appearance of this 80-year old yoga guru of the city. Apart from being a world-renowned yoga

teacher and practitioner, Dr. Bhosle has authored several books namely, "Anandi Jeevan", "Sukhi Jeevanachi Gurukilli" that provide very important and useful insights into leading a happy, healthy and content life. Dr. Bhosle can be heard every day on the All India Radio where he imparts valuable teachings on health and happy family life. Gathering an army of senior citizens and school and college-going students alike, Dr Bhosle spearheaded the protest against the then Maharashtra government's decision to begin production of alcohol from food grains, through silent protests.

3. Our third case study subject is 65 year old Shri Jadhav who has been a prominent figure in the fields of education and post-retirement, in social work. He has been an editor of over 20 books so far and shows no signs of stopping anytime soon; Mr. Jadhav has kept alive his penchant for writing even after retirement and is dedicated to his work. He visited Shakespeare's museum in London and built the museum dedicated to Maharashtra's first recipient of the Jnanpeeth Award, Shri V.S.Khandekar, on its model. Following his excellent work, he has been commissioned to lead the establishment of 5 other museums by the Maharashtra State.
4. 72 year old Mrs. Mangal Patil, our 4th case study subject, questions the stereotype that only men, post-retirement, have the provisions of leading a happy, content and responsible life and considers herself among the countless women blessed with leading as happy, content and responsible lives as their spouse/male counterparts. She is of the opinion that her life after retirement is as joyous and filled with enthusiasm as earlier. Mrs Patil says that any individual who engages himself in work of some form or the other is bound to achieve limitless happiness. Post-retirement, Mr and Mrs. Patil have taken upon themselves the responsibility of the well-being and upbringing of their grandchildren, instilling good values in them and of their qualitative education, their own children being caught up with practicing medicine. She says that her husband and she have done so considering it as their responsibility and not as a burden. Undertaking this responsibility, Mrs. Patil says, has given her the golden opportunity to keep her family bound together

and maintain a homely environment. She advises her fellow elderly beings to keep living life with bountiful happiness in their heart and mind.

5. Mrs. Leela Kulkarni, our 63 year old case study subject, has the distinction of being honored with “The Best Teacher” Award by the then President of India, Shri K.R.Narayanan. She has been actively participating in social work-related activities with more vigor and enthusiasm than earlier. She has been a prominent figure in the issue of women empowerment through her noteworthy contributions towards self-help groups, adult education, environmental awareness, women literacy expeditions etc. Her striking contributions towards the upliftment of the disabled and handicapped and the socio-cultural, mental and physical development of the children living in slums and rural areas are most noteworthy.

CONCLUSIONS:

The following conclusions may be made out of the results obtained, at the theoretical and abstracts level:

Two variables that have been found to have a significant impact upon the self-perceptions of older individuals are health and socioeconomic status. Regardless of one's personality, a particularly significant variable affecting an individual's adjustment to old age is his or her level of health; one's health in old age is the single most important factor in determining the quality of life that is available. Aged persons in good health are invariably found to have a better quality of life and a more satisfying lifestyle, as well as a more optimistic outlook on life in general. The overall situation seems to be that older people feel quite good about themselves.

On the whole the respondents are protected by their family members, relatives and in some case a few neighbors. These retirees are definitely on a broad scale in better position. So, family remains as the best resort to people in their post-retirement life which will be sustained if an effective national policy to ameliorate the economic conditions of the retirees from time to time is to be drafted and surveillance of the policy implementation is to be facilitated. Many retirees who are energetic can be made to participate in community development

works and social work in and around the places. Planners, policy –makers, administrators and social gerontologists have also now indentified thorough investigation into the economic, social, physical and psychological conditions of the retirees as a top priority area of research.

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