



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Social Science

## BRINGING LIFE TO YEARS: RELEVANT LITERATURE ON AGEING

**KEY WORDS:** Ageing, literature, review, health, wellbeing, economic dependency

Dr. Minni K. T.  
Harikumar

## ABSTRACT

Age is just a number' but, ageing brings forth numerous challenges to the concerned. With the increase in old age dependency ratio aged and aging has opened a Pandora's Box throwing several questions at the society, government and the aged themselves.

Countries like India are on a time bomb as there has been tremendous increase in aged population of lately and thus in another twenty years India would be faced with various challenges that it would give rise to.

The paper tries to bring together various international and national evidence based articles and studies carried out on aging and its associated aspects. This is to give a better understanding on the discussions revolving around the status of aged in respect to their health and illness, economic dependency, psychological wellbeing, familial support system, and effective policies and programs.

## INTRODUCTION

Ageing of an individual involves a series of multi-dimensional process in which there are biological as well as physical changes. The onset of these changes varies in each individual. Physical and psychological deterioration may be hastened or arrested by the social, economic and situational environment they are in. America saw a surge in elderly population between 1900 and 1950 thus compelling them to pay more attention to the problems like financial dependency, employment, housing and care taking, long term illness and disability etc. (Clark, 1970). China and India which are the most populous countries in the world together have the major proportion of elderly. The demographic shift in the coming years would prove fatal to India's social setting, economy and health care system. India being a young country has been negligent of the issue of 'Ageing' but with the United Nation's 'Vienna declaration' in 1982 as the international year of the elderly there was much hue and cry which spurred several research activities in the area by the government as well as the academicians.

## Socio-cultural Well-being of Aged

When we speak of ageing and aged the first and foremost factor that comes to the mind is debility. The social setting and cultural beliefs plays an important part in the wellbeing of aged as it influences the ageing process and also determines how a person with debility sustains in a community. The book by (Tibbitts, 1970) gives a clear idea about the origin of social gerontology, impact of ageing on individual activities and social roles. The book has also deliberated on ageing in preindustrial and industrial societies. The study by (Saxena, 2006) analyses the bio-psycho, socio-economic and cultural aspects of ageing problems in India. The book by (Sharma, 2009) has reflected on thirty three empirical Indian studies on individual ageing as well as aged population.

The life of an aged becomes more comfortable with adaption to appropriate activities and social setting, at the same time access to good social support and age friendly environment is the key to better adaptation. The study by (Hegde, 2008) shows how one could grow old gracefully and could achieve many things even at the ripe old age. Whereas (Eriksson, 2010) tried to understand how the health and longevity can be promoted during Ageing through his study. The study by (Robin & Simon, 2011) highlights the traditional emphasis on the role of community in later life and explores the emergence of marketization and consumerism. The research study by (Eamon, 2012) is based on an evaluation of a national arts festival in Ireland called 'Bealtaine' that celebrates creativity in older people each year.

The relationship dynamics have undergone changes due to several factors. The women in the family who are considered as the basic carers have started taking up economic activities and have become more career oriented thus changing the family structure. The study by (Das & Urvi, 2006) has made an attempt to fill some gaps in the study of institutional support available to elderly population. The

study by (Gurjeet, 2010) tries to explore the demographic and socio-economic background of older persons residing in the old-age homes. In her study (Jeehun, 2011) concludes that the patterned two-way transnational mobility in providing care and support is shaped by cultural norms and the practical negotiation of family obligations. The study on residential care facility by (Yang, et al., 2011) found that the older residents' accessibility to a Residential Care Facility (RCF) was affected by geographical, economic and socio-cultural factors.

## Economic Challenges and Dependency among Aged

Economic status plays a part in determining the quality of life, privileges enjoyed and maintaining a healthy life style. A critical review by (Nayar, 2006) on older person's maintenance, care and protection bill 2005 gives an overview of older persons maintenance from their children including adopted/step children and grandchildren. A study on socio-economic and health dimensions by (Moneer, 2006) in India observes that a bulk of the aged is not able to withstand the economic realities.

In their study (Jessica & Toni, 2011) used a health lens to investigate the retirement income needs of older New Zealanders living independently. In a study (Jennifer, et al., 2011) on adjustment to socio-economic status in later life the scholars used two assessments of subjective social status to determine their perception of social-rank.

## Physical and Psychological Wellbeing of Aged

Health is an outcome of supportive social environment, timely access to healthcare and stable economic background. Age as it progresses is accompanied by health issues which need to be well taken care of; reducing disability is the key to having a dignified existence in later life. For a long time health and health issues were perceived to be solely biological but with more degenerative illness coming in to the scenario the perspective have gradually shifted to causative factors. The book by (Howard, et al., 1963) provides a brief outline of how in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, some of the basic elements of the concept of social medicine had been put together. Another book written by (Gary & Ray, 1994) brings together a variety of conceptual and methodological approaches to study health-related quality of life. The book by (Chloe, et al., 2010) is a composition of articles that reflects important changes in the study of health and illness. A section deeply examines illness, experience, and trajectories thus emphasizing social constructionist approaches.

The book by (Dak, 1991) is a volume which contains development of Sociology of Health in India. It also discusses about the different committees that were formed for health policies and programs in India. The book by (Peckham, 2004) through a collection of some key papers highlights the increasingly important contribution of Medical Sociology. The scholars (Jeffrey, et al., 2007) in their book discuss how Sociology as a discipline can help generate and nourish new form of enquiry in the field of health and medicines. The compilation by (Paramjeet, 1992) includes various theoretical

approaches to ageing. The author has exploded various myths regarding retirement, socio-economic status and coping strategies. The book by (Nicholas, 1993) sets out some of the components of 'Postmodern' social theory of health and healing, deriving from theorists. The book by (White, 2009) has tried to discuss elaborately the impact of class, professional power, gender and ethnicity, in both shaping and distributing the disease. The author also elaborates several theoretical perspectives or approaches to flesh out the arguments.

The study by (Santhi, 2008) has highlighted the concept of healthy life expectancy which can be considered a family of summary measures of population health. It provides a detailed review of the procedure used to calculate this health indicator. In his book (Biplab, 2009) examine the old-age gender deferential in health and its socio-economic and demographic determinants in India based on the National Sample Survey data collected in 2004. The edited book by (Shanthi & Irudaya, 2010) deals with physical health and diseases. The paper by Mala Kapur and Shankar Das in it deals with elder abuse and its effects. The work by (Laura & Erica, 2012) tries to examine how older adults experience the physical and social realities of having multiple chronic conditions in later life. The study by (Eriksson, 2010) tried to understand how the health and longevity can be promoted during ageing.

In a study by (Ashish, 2011) the author has highlighted that emergency room forms a fulcrum of the health care as it is instrumental in reduction of mortality and prevention of life time morbidity in the elderly. A study on emergency care seeking pattern by (Alka, 2005) proves that males are the most frequent visitors to emergency care. The study by (Amol, et al., 2010) has tried to understand the health care seeking pattern and high mortality due to communicable and non-communicable diseases among elderly in rural area.

In his study (Viswanathan, 1969) highlights the relationship between under-nutrition and increased health vulnerability. The study by (Harshal & Poonam, 2010) is on medico-social problems in the elderly population in an urban slum. The study by (Ajay, et al., 2010) is on morbidity pattern on residents of old-age homes in an urban area.

The exploration by (Sita, et al., 2011) had made an effort to determine the type of geriatric disabilities; level of physical activity and activities of daily living. In a research on diet and disease by (Swati, et al., 2006) on women for iron deficiency 'anemia' showed that the majority were in the age group of 70 years. The study by (Chandwani, et al., 2008) show that majority of the elderly were out of work force and were partially or totally dependent on others and suffering from health problems with a sense of neglect by their family members.

The exploration by (Pallavi, et al., 2011) shows that economic status and age affect life-style pattern, diet, nutrition, disease profile and mental health profile. The study by (Emmanuelle & Nika, 2011) explored older adults' experience of becoming regular exercisers in a gym and their interactions with their younger gym instructor.

In the book the authors (Alpassi & Neville, 2003) investigated the relationships between loneliness, health, and depression in older men. The most significant relationship to depression was that of loneliness. In her work (Madhu, 2009) examined the predictors of depression among ageing women as they experience a range of changes. In a study of prevalence of depression in elderly (Monica, et al., 2010) have made an attempt to assess the depression among the elderly with medical conditions. It is often associated with medical illness and is bi-directional leading to further potentiating of morbidity. The study on healthy Ageing by (Mathur, 2011) shows how functional health has been associated with quality of self-maintenance, intellectual status, emotional status, social activity and attitude towards the world and self. (Amit & Kantharia, 2006) in their paper assessed the cognitive impairment and depressive symptomatology in elderly and also examined its distribution and association with age, gender and literacy. In the study on Dementia (Megumi & Jenny, 2011) have examined

care-givers' perception of occupational performance of their dementia affected elderly from three aspects: person, occupation and environment. The study by (Puneet, et al., 2010) has tried to ascertain the home based long term care giving patterns for the elderly bedridden patients in Chandigarh. A study by (Komal, et al., 2009) is a collection of baseline data regarding social aspects and impact evaluation of need based NHE (Nutrition Health Education) intervention on knowledge retention and practices of female elderly self-care givers.

The book by (Anitha, et al., 2009) has tried to identify the problem of elder abuse in old age homes in Chennai. In a study by (Sebastian & Sekhar, 2010) the authors have made an attempt to find the magnitude and nature of abuse in India.

**CONCLUSION**

The review of several literatures pertaining to Ageing have been carried out to have a greater and detailed understanding of the various issues and the area covered under research. While it was found that there were books which gave a detailed reflection of the origin and background of social gerontology in countries like USA and UK there were none in the Indian context. Likewise studies on quality of life of aged, changing roles in life from a social angle was done more by western authors, there need to be more studies in this sphere at the national level. There is also a considerable lag in the economic aspects of studies in India. Many studies on physical and psychological aspects of aged had been reviewed but most of the studies are looked into from various perspective other than sociological or social. The studies are carried out by medical professionals or researchers belonging to allied areas of medical study. Few studies which were found to be from social perspective are found to focus on institutionalised elderly. There is a dearth in studies related to policies and programs few papers found were documents made by governmental organisations or NGO's.

One of the aims of any social research pertaining to a problem is to project the findings and gain the attention of policy makers. Therefore it is essential to have a clear knowledge of the existing policies and programs and to know how effective these programs are. The book by (Phoebe & Irudaya, 2005) is the result of an idea to create a special book on ageing in India. This book provides a collection of studies of various aspects of ageing in India combined with analyses of various policies and recommendations.

The huge and almost uncharted sea of domestic abuse of the elderly is a crying issue to which adequate attention has not been paid in the Bill. In his book (Irudaya, 2008) gives an overview on ageing, pension, and social security in South Asia that is Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as the elderly population in these countries is expected to reach 400 million by 2050. Periodical on ageing and development "Ageways" 80<sup>th</sup> issue summarizes ageing in the twenty-first century. This report makes the case for governments, NGO's, global institutions and civil society to realign 21<sup>st</sup> century society to fit the realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century demographics (HelpAge International, 2013).

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