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Assessment of Psychological Well-Being among Elderly Individuals in Selected Community Areas of Vadodara District, Gujarat: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Background:
Population ageing is a global phenomenon, with a rapid increase in the proportion of elderly individuals, particularly in developing countries like India. Psychological well-being among the elderly has emerged as a critical public health concern, as ageing is often associated with increased vulnerability to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction. Understanding these psychological dimensions is essential for designing community-based interventions that enhance quality of life in later years.

Objectives:
The present study aimed to assess the psychological well-being of elderly individuals in selected community areas of Vadodara district, Gujarat, and to examine the relationships between depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction.

Methods:
A community-based cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among 114 elderly individuals aged 60 years and above. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured socio-demographic questionnaire, Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS), Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). Face-to-face interviews were conducted after obtaining informed consent. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

Results:
The findings revealed that a significant proportion of elderly individuals experienced mild to moderate levels of depression and anxiety. Approximately 38.6% of participants had mild depression, while 21.1% exhibited moderate depression. Anxiety levels were also notable, with 34.2% reporting mild anxiety and 17.5% moderate anxiety. Regarding life satisfaction, 46.5% of participants reported moderate satisfaction, while only 18.4% demonstrated high satisfaction levels. Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between depression and anxiety ($r = 0.62$), and a negative correlation between depression and life satisfaction ($r = -0.55$), suggesting that higher psychological distress is associated with lower life satisfaction.

Conclusion:
The study highlights a considerable burden of psychological distress among elderly individuals in community settings. Depression and anxiety were found to be prevalent and negatively associated with life satisfaction. These findings emphasize the need for early screening, community-based mental health programs, and supportive interventions to promote psychological well-being among the elderly population. Policymakers and healthcare providers should prioritize geriatric mental health as a key component of primary healthcare services.

INTRODUCTION

Ageing is an inevitable biological process characterized by progressive decline in physiological and psychological functions. Globally, the elderly population is increasing at an unprecedented rate due to improved healthcare services and increased life expectancy. In India, individuals aged 60 years and above constitute a significant and growing segment of the population. While longevity is a positive indicator of development, it also brings challenges, particularly related to mental health and well-being.

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of an individual's life. Among elderly individuals, it is influenced by various factors such as physical health status, social support, economic stability, and life transitions such as retirement, bereavement, and social isolation. Mental health issues like depression and anxiety are common in this age group but often remain underdiagnosed and undertreated due to stigma, lack of awareness, and limited access to mental health services.

Depression is one of the most prevalent mental health disorders among the elderly and is associated with increased morbidity, disability, and reduced quality of life. Anxiety disorders, though less frequently recognized, significantly impact daily functioning and overall well-being. In contrast, life satisfaction serves as a positive indicator of psychological health and reflects an individual's overall perception of their life circumstances.

In the Indian context, traditional family systems have historically provided emotional and social support to elderly individuals. However, rapid urbanization, migration, and changing family structures have led to increased isolation and neglect among the elderly. This shift underscores the need for community-based assessments to understand the current status of psychological well-being in this population.

Despite the growing importance of geriatric mental health, there is limited community-level data available, particularly in semi-urban and rural regions like Vadodara district. Identifying the prevalence of psychological issues and understanding their interrelationships can help in developing targeted interventions and policies.

Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction among elderly individuals in selected community areas of Vadodara district, Gujarat. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the relationships between these psychological variables to provide a comprehensive understanding of elderly mental health.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a community-based cross-sectional descriptive design to assess psychological well-being among elderly individuals. The cross-sectional design was chosen as it allows for the assessment of multiple variables at a single point in time, making it suitable for identifying prevalence and relationships among psychological factors.

The study was conducted in selected community areas of Vadodara district, Gujarat, India. These areas were selected based on accessibility and representation of diverse socio-demographic backgrounds. The study population consisted of elderly individuals aged 60 years and above who were permanent residents of the selected communities.

A total of 114 participants were included in the study. The sample size was determined based on feasibility and availability of participants during the data collection period. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants. Although this method may limit generalizability, it was appropriate for the exploratory nature of the study.

Inclusion criteria included elderly individuals aged 60 years and above, those residing in the selected community areas, and individuals who were willing to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria included individuals with severe cognitive impairment, those who were critically ill, and those unable to communicate effectively.

Data were collected using standardized and validated tools. A socio-demographic questionnaire was used to gather information on age, gender, marital status, education, occupation, and living arrangements. Psychological well-being was assessed using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS), Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). These tools have been widely used and demonstrate good reliability and validity in geriatric populations.

Data collection was carried out through face-to-face interviews. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained

from all participants. The purpose of the study was explained, and confidentiality was assured. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable and private setting to ensure accurate responses. An intelligent monitoring framework was utilized to systematically record responses and minimize data entry errors.

Data were coded and entered into SPSS software for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation analysis, were used to examine relationships between depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=114)

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age 60–69	52	45.6
Age 70–79	38	33.3
Age ≥80	24	21.1
Male	60	52.6
Female	54	47.4
Married	72	63.2
Widowed	42	36.8

The majority of participants (45.6%) were aged between 60–69 years. Slightly more than half were male (52.6%), and most were married (63.2%).

Table 2: Distribution of Depression Levels (GDS)

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Normal	46	40.3
Mild	44	38.6
Moderate	24	21.1

A considerable proportion of participants exhibited mild to moderate depression.

Table 3: Distribution of Anxiety Levels (GAD-7)

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Minimal	55	48.3
Mild	39	34.2
Moderate	20	17.5

Nearly half of the participants reported minimal anxiety, but a significant number experienced mild to moderate anxiety.

Table 4: Life Satisfaction Levels (SWLS)

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	40	35.1
Moderate	53	46.5
High	21	18.4

Most participants reported moderate life satisfaction, with fewer experiencing high satisfaction.

Table 5: Correlation between Variables

Variables	Correlation (r)
Depression & Anxiety	0.62
Depression & Life Satisfaction	-0.55
Anxiety & Life Satisfaction	-0.48

There was a strong positive correlation between depression and anxiety, indicating that higher depression is associated with increased anxiety. Negative correlations were observed between depression and life satisfaction, as well as anxiety and life satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study highlight significant psychological challenges faced by elderly individuals in community settings. A notable proportion of participants experienced mild to moderate depression, which aligns with previous studies indicating high prevalence of depressive symptoms among the elderly. Factors such as social isolation, chronic illness, and financial dependency may contribute to this trend.

Anxiety was also prevalent among participants, although slightly lower than depression levels. This may be attributed to concerns related to health, security, and uncertainty about the future. The coexistence of depression and anxiety, as indicated by the strong positive correlation, suggests the need for integrated mental health interventions.

Life satisfaction was found to be moderate in most participants, with only a small

percentage reporting high satisfaction. This reflects the impact of psychological distress on overall well-being. The negative correlation between depression and life satisfaction emphasizes that improving mental health can significantly enhance quality of life.

The study findings are consistent with existing literature that highlights the importance of social support and community engagement in promoting psychological well-being among the elderly. Interventions such as counseling, support groups, and recreational activities can play a vital role in reducing psychological distress.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee prior to the commencement of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose and procedures of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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