

## **The psychosocial well-being of older persons in Kerala, India**

Demographic transition brings in many challenges to the population, and one of the most important of those issues is the increasing numbers of the elderly population. In 2010, about 524 million aged people, which is about 8 per cent of the world population. This figure is expected to increase to about 1.5 billion in 2050, about 16 per cent of the population. The increase in the elderly population during the twenty-first century will mostly be happening in developing countries. India is also experiencing the ageing of the population, though at varying intensities in the states. As per the 2011 census results, 12.6 per cent of Kerala's population was above 60 years of age, as against 8.6 per cent in India. Population ageing is an inevitable outcome of age structural transition. The problems among the elderly are diverse. Support received from other family members or society is an essential determinant of physical and mental health, well-being and safety of the elderly. Studies suggested that psychological and sociological factors have a significant influence on the well-being of the elderly. As ageing increases, there are reports of offences committed towards older people, primarily by family members. Elder abuse and neglect are two such social offences, which adversely affect the well-being of older adults. The feeling of depression and subjective well-being are the two significant indicators of the psychological well-being of the elderly.

The present study aims to assess the psychosocial well-being of the elderly in Kerala. The study is based on primary data collected from old aged individuals and their family members from three districts: Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur, and Kozhikode. The GDS: SF (Geriatric Depression Scale Short Form) consisting of 15 questions requiring "yes" or "no" answers was used to assess depression among the study population. In the present study, the Subjective Well Being (SUBI) Scale was used to measure the surveyed elderly population's subjective well-being.

It is found that about one-fifth of the elderly reported the experience of some form of abuse. Among the different forms of abuse, verbal abuse is the most common type, followed by economic and emotional abuse. Women experience a higher prevalence of abuse than men. The highest proportion of elderly who reported abuse is those who live alone. Around one-tenth of the elderly have experienced neglect. Living with family members is a prime factor that reduces neglect towards the elderly. The findings of the GDS:SF used to assess depression showed that the highest per cent of severely depressed elderly is seen among those of age 80+, and there is no sex difference in depression among the elderly. It is also seen that being without a spouse is a risk factor for depression among the elderly.

Older people's physical functioning and psychosocial well-being are closely interrelated. The mean SUBI score of 15.9 obtained in this study indicates good well-being among the elderly. SUBI scores did not vary much when comparing the different age groups. This study suggests that the living arrangements of the elderly are strongly associated with the psychosocial well-being of the elderly. Elderly living alone and those living with members other than spouse or children are more likely to suffer from the poor status of mental health. It is suggested that social and kin relations are an essential contributing factor for enhancing the psychosocial well-being of the elderly. The study suggests avenues of better social interaction for meaningful engagement and emotional support for older persons.